Impact of Vipassana Mindfulness Meditation on Emotional Intelligence, Character Strengths and Well-Being

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Abstract

Mindfulness is being looked upon like a pill or a shortcut, given its recent commoditization and commercialization. The roots of modern-day mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) can be traced to Vipassana and Zen mindfulness meditation, which are based on the Buddha's teachings that originated nearly 2500 years ago. Notably, reducing stress and health benefits are the primary, if not the only, aim of MBIs. In contrast, such benefits are the by-products that arise from the practice of Vipassana and Zen mindfulness meditation, as they aim at liberation from human suffering common to the whole humankind, and developing virtues like loving-kindness.

Positive psychology has turned to interventions that foster well-being, build enduring happiness and accompanying strengths of character. There is growing evidence of the positive impact of mindfulness on workplace outcomes, and its crucial role during Covid-19 pandemic. While there is a surge in research on MBIs, there is a dearth of studies on Vipassana especially amongst healthy subjects. Vipassana, as taught by Shri S. N. Goenka, is a universal (non-sectarian) meditation practice offered across the globe for free and accessible to people of all faiths, ages and backgrounds.

This study employs [a] Experimental design to examine the impact of Vipassana MM on well-being [SWB: subjective well-being (affective and cognitive) and PWB: psychological well-being (flourishing)], character strengths (like hope, gratitude, curiosity, zest and love), trait emotional intelligence (EI) and Presence of Meaning (PM) and [b] Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to illuminate the essence of the lived experiences that influence one's identity and sense of well-being.

Factorial (2 x 3) mixed design MANCOVA was used to analyze the results of the experiment with 154 healthy professionals during the pandemic (77 in the experimental group undertaking their first 10-days Vipassana course, vis-à-vis 77 in the control group who got acceptance but could not attend their first course). Group x time interaction effect indicated that Vipassana MM led to significant enhancement in well-being (SWB and PWB), character strengths, trait EI, PM and mindfulness vis-à-vis the control group. Statistically significant interaction effect (pre - post) has been observed [small to large effect sizes (Cohen's d)], and the significant effect has been sustained (pre - follow-up) over 15 weeks during the pandemic.

Serial mediation analysis revealed the underlying mechanisms through which Vipassana MM exerts its positive effect on various dimensions of well-being. Increase in positive affect and decrease in negative affect (affective well-being) were mediated by increase in trait EI as well as serially mediated first via increase in mindfulness and then increase in trait EI. Increase in life satisfaction (cognitive well-being) was mediated by increase in trait EI and increase in PM as well as serially mediated first via increase in mindfulness and then increase in trait EI or PM. Increase in flourishing (PWB) was mediated by increase in PM, increase in Hope and increase in Gratitude as well as serially mediated first via increase in mindfulness and then increase in PM or Hope or Gratitude.

As a part of the IPA, 12 seasoned professionals who are long-term Vipassana meditators (15+ yrs. of work experience, 4000+ hrs. of meditation, multiple courses with regular practice over 5 yrs.) were

interviewed. Six super-ordinate themes (like ‘Master of my destiny’, ‘Flexible dynamic and functional view of self’) have emerged.

As a mixed methods study, strands (QUAN and QUAL) have been integrated to draw and strengthen the meta-inferences (through complementarity and triangulation) with a view to (a) decode the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the impact of Vipassana MM, (b) unveil its distinctiveness.

The study offers novel evidence and may find significance in the field of positive psychology, and in policymaking to institutionalize and disseminate the benefits in the education sector, industry and society at large. It has the potential to further the sustainable development goal 3 by the United Nations - ‘Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.’

Keywords: Mindfulness meditation, Vipassana, Well-being, Emotional Intelligence, Character Strengths, Meaning in life, Positive Affect, Negative Affect, Life Satisfaction, Flourishing

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1 INTRODUCTION

In an HBR article, Chade-Meng Tan (2015), who led the creation of a mindfulness-based emotional intelligence program called 'Search Inside Yourself' at Google (Tan, 2014), explained how mindfulness could make you more effective; in 'just 6 seconds'.

Two years hence, Van Dam and colleagues (2017) urged scientists, media and the public to 'Mind the hype' in their critical evaluation and prescriptive agenda for research on mindfulness and meditation.

Two years hence, the tweet from the then CEO of Twitter (Jack Dorsey [@jack], 2019) read, "Finished my 3rd vipassana 10 days at Dhamma Pataka in South Africa. Continues to be the toughest and best thing I do for myself…"

Two years hence, the WHO (2021), in the *Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2030*, explicitly encouraged using evidence-based traditional practices like yoga and meditation to promote mental health and well-being for all.

So, the statement *mindfulness wields a positive impact at the level of individual, organization and society;* is both an affirmation and a question that needs to be objectively examined. This becomes pertinent at a time when [a] the United Nations (2021) asserts that the COVID-19 pandemic has halted or reversed a decade of progress in health and [b] we are witnessing commoditization and commercialization of decontextualized mindfulness practices (Khong, 2021).

This study aims to investigate the impact of Vipassana mindfulness meditation, a non-sectarian practice rooted in the teachings of the Buddha and accessible across the globe for free, on well-being, emotional intelligence and meaning in life amongst professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic. The intention is not to compare Vipassana mindfulness meditation with other mindfulness-based interventions. Instead, it is to objectively examine the 'what' and 'how' of its impact and advocate joint action to further the sustainable development goal 3 by the United Nations - ‘Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages'.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Unfolding Mindfulness

The word mindfulness derives from the Pali word 'sati', which can be found in the early Buddhist scriptures such as Abhidhamma. Right mindfulness (*sammā sati*) is the seventh factor of the noble eightfold path as taught by the Buddha (Bodhi, 2000, 2011). Roots of modern-day mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) like mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) can be traced to Vipassana and Zen meditation, which are rooted in the teachings of the Buddha (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011; Gilpin, 2008; Rapgay & Bystrisky, 2009). Consciously blending different elements, "MBSR is mostly Vipassana practice (in the *Theravāda*[1] sense)…with a Zen attitude" (Kabat-Zinn's email cited in Gilpin, 2008, p. 238), while "MBCT has more of a *Theravādan* [*sic*] flavour, and less of a Zen flavour, than MBSR" (Tesdale's email cited in Gilpin, 2008, p. 239).

2.2 Vipassana Meditation

Vipassana, which means to 'see things as they really are', enables the practitioner to experientially realize the nature of reality, i.e. changing and impermanent (Hart, 2011; *Vipassana Meditation*, 2018). While the role of *sati* (mindfulness) is to lay open the contents of the experience, *sampajañña* (clear

comprehension) helps to recognize the contents as they are, and *sampajañña* advances into *paññā* (wisdom) on experientially realizing the nature of all internal and external phenomena, i.e. anicca or impermanence (Bodhi, 2011; Chavan, 2007; Hart, 2011).

Vipassana meditation is often referred to as 'mindfulness meditation' or 'MM' (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011). Vipassana MM trains one in *sīla* (virtue), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom), that encompasses the threefold division of the noble eightfold path leading to liberation from suffering (Hart, 2011; Nyanaponika, 1962).

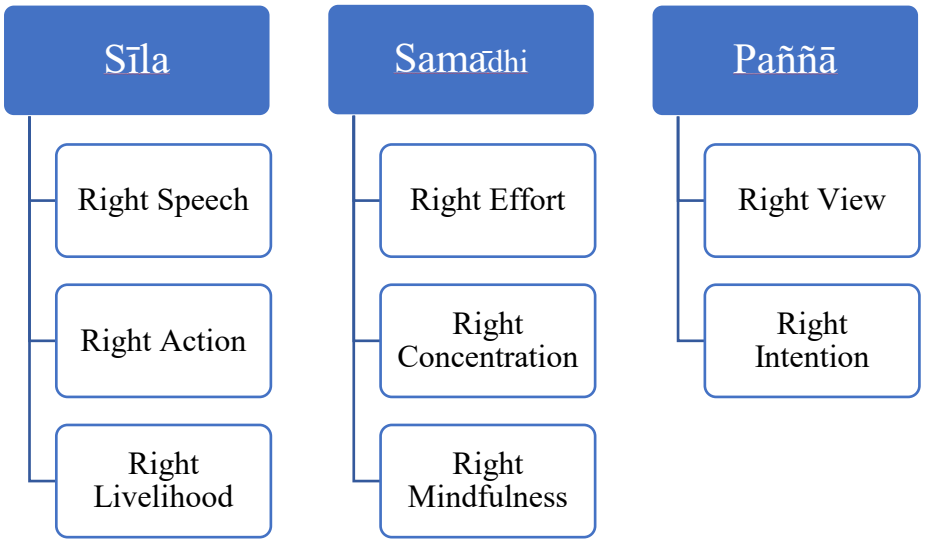

Figure 2.1: *Noble Eightfold Path*

As vividly described by Bodhi (2011), for mindfulness to qualify as the 'right mindfulness' (*sammā sati*) of the noble eightfold path, it needs to be in concomitance with a web of factors that provides direction and purpose.

Previous research indicates that Vipassana MM is associated with reduced mental disorders and enhanced tolerance to stress (Chiesa, 2010), increased well-being and mindfulness (Szekeres & Wertheim, 2015), improved workplace outcomes like employees' well-being and communication skills (Pradhan & Ajithkumar, 2018, 2019) and neuroplastic changes underpinning cognitive processing and enhanced states of well-being (Kakumanu et al., 2019).

2.3 Aim of MBIs and MMs

MBSR, as the name suggests, was developed initially to manage chronic pain and stress-related disorders, while MBCT was developed within the field of cognitive behavioural therapy (Gilpin, 2008). The objective was to make the practice "relevant and compelling in the lives of the participants, yet without denaturing the dharma dimension" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 149). MBSR and MBCT have since been the two most widely employed and investigated MBIs (Gu et al., 2015).

While reducing stress and health benefits are the primary, if not the only, aim of modern mindfulness-based interventions, such benefits are the by-products that arise from the correct practice of Vipassana and Zen mindfulness meditation.

Vipassana MM, unlike MBIs, aims at liberation from human suffering common to the whole of humankind and developing perfections or highest virtues (termed as *Pāramīs*) like generosity, patience, and *mettā bhāvanā* - loving-kindness or goodwill towards others (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011; Hart, 2011; Sinha et al., 2020).

2.4 The Spread of Vipassana and its Global Footprint

Vipassana, as taught by S. N. Goenka in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, is a meditation practice based on the teachings of the Buddha. Shri S. N. Goenka (1924-2013) was authorized in 1969 as a teacher of Vipassana meditation by Sayagyi U Ba Khin. In 1969 he came to India and began teaching Vipassana, bringing back the technique into India (the land of origin where Buddha taught) after around 2500 years. Over the years he established a network of meditation centers across the world and trained more than 1300 assistant teachers who conduct courses using recordings of Shri Goenka, and today more than 1,20,000 people attend these courses each year across 94+ countries ("S. N. Goenka," 2022). The standardized 10-days residential course is offered at 225 centres and 136 non-centres across the globe for free. The standardized protocol across the globe is highlighted in the code of discipline and the daily timetable for a 10 days Vipassana course (*Vipassana Meditation - Introduction*, 2018):

Vipassana, has always been targeted at entire humankind. S. N. Goenka explicates, "The Buddha never taught any 'ism' or sectarian doctrine. He taught something from which people of every background can benefit: an art of living" (Hart, 2011, p. 18).

In his letter (before passing away in 1971), Sayagyi U Ba Khin, the teacher of S. N. Goenka, wrote, "The time clock of Vipassana is now struck – that is, for revival of the Buddha-Dhamma, Vipassana in practice. We have no doubt whatsoever about definite results; … results which will keep them in good stead and in a state of well-being and happiness for the rest of their lives" (Pariyatti, 2020).

Upon the passing away of his teacher, S. N. Goenka, who was authorized by Sayagyi U Ba Khin to teach Vipassana, said, "Whenever I give Dhamma to anyone, I feel the presence of my Dhamma father and his *mettā* vibrations, and I feel that I am just a humble representative of him, assisting to spread Dhamma to suffering beings everywhere, in fulfilment of his wishes" (Pariyatti, 2020).

Upon the passing away of S. N. Goenka, Jack Kornfield, noted author who spread Buddha's teachings, wrote, "In every generation, there are a few visionary and profound masters who hold high the lamp of the Dhamma to illuminate the world…Ven. S. N. Goenka was one of the great world masters of our time." Some of the prominent students (meditation teachers, authors, researchers) of S. N. Goenka include Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, Ram Dass, Robert Hover, Daniel Goleman, Richard Davidson ("S. N. Goenka," 2022).

Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founder of MBSR, trained with Robert Hover as also Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield (at Insight Meditation Society), while John Teasdale, the co-founder of MBCT, was highly influenced by Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg and Jon Kabat-Zinn (Gilpin, 2008). Thus, as detailed above in section 2.1, it is no surprise that both MBSR and MBCT (the two most widely employed and investigated MBIs) significantly draw from and/ or have been influenced/ inspired by the practice of Vipassana.

The idea is not to compare these practices (MMs vs MBIs) or to credit any practice or individual, but rather systematically trace the of Vipassana (and its growing influence) across the globe as a non-sectarian mindfulness meditation practice targeted towards humankind.

2.5 Role of India

India has been at the forefront in disseminating the wisdom and freely sharing the traditional practices - from proposing the International Yoga Day at United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2014 and leading its celebrations in 2021 with the theme 'Yoga for well-being' to funding projects and encouraging researchers to demystify the science behind ancient yoga and meditation practices through the SATYAM (Science and Technology of Yoga and Meditation) programme. As proclaimed by Swami Vivekananda, a renowned social and spiritual leader, "India, the land of introspection and spirituality, again must start the wave which is going to spiritualize the material civilization of the world. Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions in other lands. Believe me, my friends, this is going to be" (Vivekananda, 1987, para. 3). The choice of the words' life-giving water' is befitting in light of the growing focus of positive psychology towards interventions that not only foster well-being but also build lasting happiness with concomitant strengths of character that enable individuals and society to flourish. For Aristotle (trans. 2000), happiness consists in, and only in, the exercise of virtues of character and thought. Positive psychology has turned to interventions that foster well-being, build enduring happiness and accompanying strengths of character. (Seligman et al., 2005).

2.6 Need of the Hour

Thus, the need of the hour is not to be myopic to reduce or eliminate specific symptoms of mental disorders but instead focus on examining and disseminating the holistic benefits of easily accessible universal practices - from well-being to lasting happiness to character strengths, that are more relevant to humanity than ever before.

Thus, 'mindfulness is not two-minute noodles' (Singh, 2013), instead it is an idiographic process by which the meditator experientially gains the insight of 'impermanence', by realizing the ephemeral nature of the self and the world, thereby opening the door to enduring peace and happiness (Hart, 2011; Sharma, 2016).

As elucidated in the teachings of the Buddha in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta, Dīgha Nikayā, II.3 (and explained by S. N. Goenka on Day 8 of the 10 days Vipassana course)*: 'Aniccā vata saṅkhārā, uppādavaya-dhamminō, Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti, tesaṃ vūpasamō sukhō'* i.e., Impermanent truly are compounded things, by nature arising and passing away. If they arise and are extinguished, their eradication brings happiness (Goenka & Hart, 2000, p.103).

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1 Theories and Models

3.1.1 Relational Frame Theory (RFT) and Functional Senses of Self

Ricoeur (1992) argued that individuals continuously create and interpret identity through narratives. There are no fundamental truths about an identity, just new constructions, and the resilience of an identity depends on upholding a particular narrative (Giddens, 1991).

Notably, humans have the unique capacity to conceive a past and a future, and leverage the power of language to construct a sense of self and/ or develop relational frames surrounding self. An individual may either rigidly hold on to such relational frames as literal truths (eg. 'I am a failure' or 'I am not good enough') 'OR' engage with them flexibly, in a given context, as constructs that serve their purpose.

Atkins and Styles (2015) argued that mindfulness brings a paradigm shift in how one responds to the question 'Who am I?', and that identity change has a significant positive influence on well-being and work-place effectiveness. In the absence of an established theory of psychological processes underpinning identity development, they adopted qualitative research (interviews) to study identity change. They showed that mindfulness training directly targets the process of identity construction by enabling participants to flexibly engage between three functional senses of 'self' (Torneke, 2010): self-as-story, self-as-process and self-as-perspective i.e. mindfulness encourages people to hold their self-conceptualizations (self-as-story) less firmly, and focus more on the process of the ongoing experience in the here-and-now (self-as-process) and learn to frequently see themselves as the observer of their experience (self-as-perspective).

Flexibly and interchangeably engaging with these 'three senses of self' to alleviate suffering and foster psychological flexibility is a predominant goal of the process and practice of mindful change as a part of 'Acceptance and Commitment Therapy' (S. C. Hayes et al., 2015, 2016).

Such flexibility also enhances work meaningfulness in line with the findings of Kahn (1990) that work becomes meaningful when one's "preferred self" can be expressed through one's work. Moreover, Brook, Garcia and Fleming (2008) argued that increasing numbers of highly important facilitating (in harmony) identities are associated with higher well-being as they lower emotions related to perceived discrepancies wrt self-conception between who one is and who one ought to be.

Giles (1993) posits that as per Buddha's teachings, for something to be considered as a self, the most important characteristic is that of permanence or identity over time. But when we look to our experience, there is nothing but impermanence: our bodies, feelings, and thoughts are forever arising and passing. In this sense, where there is diversity there can be no identity. Giles (1993) further argues that as per the Buddha 'no self' is the ultimate truth. In response to the dilemma that there must be something to which the words "I" or "self" refer to, Buddha explained that not only the language of the self leads to the fabrication of a self (conventional truth) but also that a fabricated self leads to a misconstrual of the language of the self.

For Vipassana meditators, the practice of satipaṭṭhāna leads them to realize their essentially ephemeral nature and understand 'no-self' (ultimate truth) at the experiential level, thereby getting liberated from suffering (Hart, 2011).

3.1.2 The S-ART Model

Mindfulness fosters one's meta-awareness, capacity to regulate emotions and prosociality: denoted by S-ART viz. Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). Verhaeghen & Aikman (2020) reasoned that moral foundations or ethical sensitivities can be awakened and cultivated by mindfulness through discrete aspects of the S-ART framework, especially reflective awareness (a component of self-awareness) and self-transcendence; thereby offering evidence backing the Buddhist conjecture.

The S-ART framework sheds light on how Vipassana MM, attenuates biases related to self-perception by (a) enhancing self-awareness (understanding ignorance about self and the nature of reality), (b) deconditioning through self-regulation: by setting one free from the automated reaction patterns based on past conditioning, (c) fostering prosocial behaviours (self-transcendence) by cultivating virtues/ perfections (10 Pāramitās[2] including loving-kindness, giving and morality) and character strengths (Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, 1900; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ekici et al., 2020).

3.1.3 Trait Activation Theory and Identity Change

Vipassana helps the practitioner to develop wisdom from direct, personal experience (bhāvanā-mayā paññā). Such wisdom grows with practice over time. Thus, idiographic commitment is an essential feature to unravel (a) the shift in one's identity and (b) the cultivation of wisdom.

In an organizational setting, how do we create sustainable outcomes through workplace mindfulness? In response to this question, Shahbaz & Parker (2021) argued that while the idiographic commitment puts the individual at the centre, it is imperative to expand the understanding of how mindfulness as an individual's trait/ characteristic may interact with workplace factors (like autonomy/ climate/ team mindfulness) to influence the workplace outcomes by leveraging the trait activation theory. This theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003) points at how relevant situational cues or environment may encourage and facilitate an individual to express their traits (natural propensity); given that mindfulness is often operationalized as a trait. Consequently, the role of individuals holding position of responsibility/ influence in activating trait mindfulness amongst employees for sustainable workplace outcomes becomes an interesting area of study. Further, Atkins and Styles argued that such individuals are required to actively engage in identity change in organization and society in general with demands to (i) transcend self-interest, (ii) navigate complex and dynamic contexts in the face of uncertainty especially during the pandemic, (iii) address ethical dilemmas, (iv) resolve systemic issues and (v) influence others and inspire action by building a sense of coherence. Thus, it is important to examine the role of sustained practice of mindfulness on identity (sense of self) (refer 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 above) and identity change amongst seasoned professionals holding position of responsibility/ influence and the consequent influence on well-being (at the level of self and as a workplace outcome).

3.1.4 Mindlessness, Mindfulness and Plasticity

Mindfulness (sati) is the lucid awareness of the phenomenal field; that enables the practitioner to see & clearly comprehend the nature of reality (Bodhi, 2011; Rhys Davids, 1910). Thus, the practitioner, through repeated application of the awareness, is implicitly conscious of the contents of the experience.

In contrast, mindlessness is the state of a conditioned mind characterized by automatic reactions based on categorization and evaluations drawn in the past. Consequently, the individual is oblivious to 'what is' or to the novel/ alternative perspectives in the given context/ situation; thereby rendering his behaviour to be rigid/ automatic/ conditioned/ habitual (Langer, 1992; S. C. Hayes et al., 2015).

While mindlessness is associated with automatic processing; mindfulness, from a heuristic sense, does not assume the existence of capacity limitations. With plasticity being an inherent characteristic of the brain, mindfulness may improve the memory and information processing capacity (Davidson & Begley, 2012; Langer, 1992) in the short and long-term. Accordingly, Navon (1984) claimed that capacity is a 'post hoc' concept, as it is revised when previous limitation is surpassed. As mindfulness leads to deconditioning (of old habit patterns) and enables the practitioner to see 'what is' with openness and curiosity, mindfulness may facilitate freedom from self-imposed limitations (upheld by mindlessness in the past).

3.1.5 Mindfulness to Meaning Theory

In the face of adversity, mindfulness promotes eudaimonic well-being by helping an individual derive meaning in life (Garland et al., 2015) by developing an innate capacity to see the 'reality as it is' rather than 'what he/ she wants it to be' or 'what he/ she doesn't want it to be'. Mindfulness meditation enables an individual to understand the impermanent nature of all phenomena and broaden the awareness, thereby enabling the practitioner to ride through the transitory wave of adversity through positive reappraisal (reconstruction of the negative experience) and savouring (acceptance and re-contextualization of the sensorial experience) by infusing meaning (Frankl, 2000; Goenka & Hart, 2000; Garland et al., 2015; Barrett, 2017).

It is worth noting that the relevance of these theories, while examining the impact (what and how) of mindfulness, calls for taking into account the practice (MM vs MBIs), methodology/ paradigm, target group (healthy subjects vs clinical settings, experience of practitioners) and context (pandemic). This is in line with the prescriptive agenda for research on mindfulness (Van Dam et al., 2017).

3.2 Macro View Leading to Conceptual Framework for the Study

"A review of prior, relevant literature is an essential feature of any academic project. An effective review creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge. It facilitates theory development, closes areas where a plethora of research exists, and uncovers areas where research is needed" (Webster & Watson, 2002, p. 13). The aim of carrying out literature review is to understand the nature of earlier work in the context of the present study (Walsh and Downe, 2005).

3.3 The Macro View

In light of the background, it is intelligible and evident from the bibliometric analysis (Wang et al., 2021), meta-analyses (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Grossman et al., 2010; Khoury et al., 2013, 2015; McClintock et al., 2019), systematic/ integrative reviews (Gu et al., 2015; Schlechta Portella et al., 2021; Shahbaz & Parker, 2021) and critical evaluation (Van Dam et al., 2017) that

[a] most research over the past few decades has been on MBIs (especially MBSR and MBCT) and not MMs

[b] majority of the research initially focused on clinical settings and associated outcomes and [c] there is an absence of consensus on meaning, definition and operationalization of mindfulness and
[d] inadequacy of positivist paradigm and need of mixed methods studies (Huynh et al., 2019); esp. on MMs

Consequently, this study endeavours to address the gap that was succinctly highlighted by Chiesa & Malinowski (2011, p. 416), "there is an almost total absence of studies investigating the mechanisms that underlie Vipassana and Zen meditations," and that less attention has been accorded on the possible benefits in healthy subjects (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009).

With ever-growing evidence of the positive impact of mindfulness (mainly MBIs) on workplace outcomes (Janssen et al., 2018; Shahbaz & Parker, 2021); including the pivotal role that mindfulness can play in fostering well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic (Polizzi et al., 2020; Sanilevici et al., 2021; Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021), the objective of this study is to investigate the (causal) impact and unearth the underlying mechanisms through which Vipassana meditation may exert a positive effect on various dimensions of well-being in healthy professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Back in 1948, the WHO had proposed a broad definition of health, with greater emphasis on well-being, as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (*Constitution of the WHO,* 1948).

McKinsey Health Institute (MHI), in its recent report, exhorts "this is a decisive moment in the history of human health" (Coe et al., 2022, p. 2) as over the next decade the humanity can add upto 45 billion extra years of higher quality-life (on an average 6 yrs. per person). However, this calls for the society to view health as an investment not an expense and embrace a renewed and holistic understanding on health; including physical, mental, social and spiritual. The report states that [a] spiritual health includes meaning, belonging, purpose and identity and does not necessarily require or include religious belief, [b] spiritual health enables people to feel rooted and mindful in the present moment and [c] though the sub-components of spiritual health have been recognized as relevant to health for decades, only 1% of the studies related to health examine spiritual health.

4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Concept Map

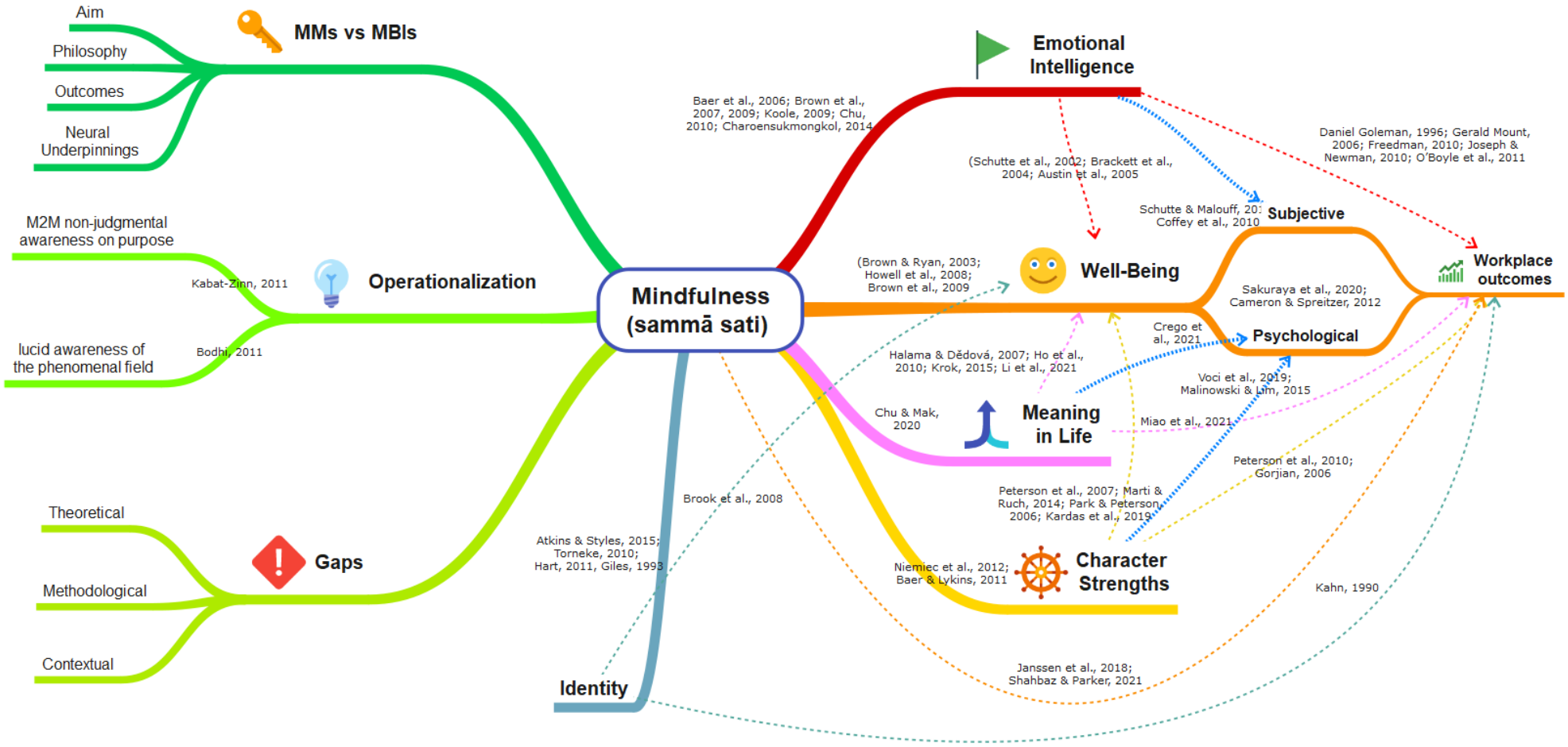
Mindfulness (sammā sati)
MMs vs MBIs
Aim
Philosophy
Outcomes
Neural Underpinnings
Operationalization
M2M non-judgmental awareness on purpose
Kabat-Zinn, 2011
lucid awareness of the phenomenal field
Bodhi, 2011
Gaps
Theoretical
Methodological
Contextual
Identity
Emotional Intelligence
Baer et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2007, 2009; Koole, 2009; Chu, 2010; Charoensukmongkol, 2014
(Schutte et al., 2002; Brackett et al., 2004; Austin et al., 2005
Daniel Goleman, 1996; Gerald Mount, 2006; Freedman, 2010; Joseph & Newman, 2010; O'Boyle et al., 2011
Schutte & Malouff, 20
Coffey et al., 2010
Subjective
Well-Being
(Brown & Ryan, 2003; Howell et al., 2008; Brown et al., 2009
Sakuraya et al., 2020; Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012
Workplace outcomes
Crego et al., 2021
Psychological
Halama & Dědová, 2007; Ho et al., 2010; Krok, 2015; Li et al., 2021
Voci et al., 2019; Malinowski & Lim, 2015
Chu & Mak, 2020
Meaning in Life
Miao et al., 2021
Peterson et al., 2010; Gorjian, 2006
Peterson et al., 2007; Marti & Ruch, 2014; Park & Peterson, 2006; Kardas et al., 2019
Brook et al., 2008
Atkins & Styles, 2015; Torneke, 2010; Hart, 2011, Giles, 1993
Niemiec et al., 2012; Baer & Lykins, 2011
Character Strengths
Kahn, 1990
Janssen et al., 2018; Shahbaz & Parker, 2021

***Figure 4.1**: Mind map proposed by the researcher (Key references supporting a given relationship/ association have been indicated)*

The concept (mind) map showcases the influence of mindfulness on select constructs/ variables (well-being, emotional intelligence, meaning in life, character strengths and identity) that have a distinct and positive influence on workplace outcomes. It also shows the relationship/ association between these constructs and well-being (both subjective and psychological well-being).

4.2 Research Gaps

Table 4.1: *Research Gaps*

Gaps	Mindfulness	What	Whom	How long/ When	How
Theoretical	**MMs** vs MBIs Definition, Operationalization	**Well-Being, EI, Meaning, Character Str.**	**Healthy** subjects, **professionals**	**Sustain** (3 months follow-up)	**Process**/ underlying mechanism wrt **MMs**
Methodological	Robust **design** to establish causality				Inadequacy of positivism (reification) **Mixed methods design**
Contextual	**3As** – Appeal (universal), Access (global), Affordability (free) **3Is** - Intention, Intensity, Impelling context			**COVID-19** pandemic	Making sense of the **lived experience** bhāvanā-mayā paññā

4.3 Research Objectives

1. To study the impact of **Vipassana Mindfulness Meditation** on **Well-being, Emotional Intelligence and Character Strengths** amongst **healthy professionals** (first time meditators) **during pandemic**
2. To assess the **sustained impact** of **Vipassana MM** over time [**15 weeks**]
3. To explicate the **influence** of sustained experience of Vipassana on **identity** and **sense of well-being** amongst seasoned professionals **during pandemic**

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

We are witnessing a mindfulness revolution with over 2978 publications per year accompanied with 70,000+ citations in 2020 (Wang et al., 2021), and a google search on the term 'mindfulness' generating 49,40,00,000 items (July 12, 2022).

So, a key question that begs our attention - Is it essential and/ or meaningful to discuss methodology at a time when we are witnessing such a revolution?!

The answer is a big 'YES'. From Ronal Purser's (2019) razor sharp critique (book) titled 'McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality' to the serious questions raised by Khong (2021, p. 3), "Is the love affair with mindfulness over, or has the practice of mindfulness matured and come of age? Is the general public getting disillusioned about mindfulness, or are they seeking a better understanding of the practice?", the writing is on the wall - commoditization coupled with the love affair for the positivist paradigm has led to the current predicament. Thus, it is no surprise that in their prescriptive agenda for research on mindfulness and meditation, Van Dam and colleagues (2017) urged that the field needs to overcome the hesitancy to move beyond logical positivism that postulates that a given measure is equivalent to the construct or phenomenon it intends to measure.

Perhaps this reluctance has led to distortion and disillusionment, while the reification has led to commoditization. To understand the gravity of the challenge, it is worth reproducing the vehement argument by Grossman (2011, p. 1035), "I argue that Western psychologists' definitions and operationalizations of mindfulness may, in fact, be near-enemies of the original Buddhist construct. At very first glance, these operationalizations may resemble that of the MBI definition, but, in reality, we may be talking about two profoundly different things. The Buddhist construct is the result of a 2500-year development of a phenomenological approach oriented toward a gradual understanding of direct experience. The other, Western-psychologist-defined versions are less-than-10-year-old attempts to objectify and quantify mindfulness by employing operationalizations that can be understood by and generally have been validated with people untrained in mindfulness practices. The dangers of distortion and reification would seem apparent."

So, the mindfulness revolution is marred with challenges despite the methodological evolution. Mixed methods seem to be the best bet as it has the potential to enable us to holistically understand the mindfulness practice and its impact. Put simply let us assume that a research team is trying to study the impact of mother's love and affection on child's development. No matter how much we try, operationalizing and trying to measure 'mother's love and affection' will not be equivalent to the construct or phenomenon it intends to measure. Likewise, only a phenomenological approach may not be able to objectively examine the impact or decode the underlying mechanisms. Inherently both paradigms have their strengths and weaknesses. The best way is to bring them together, that is the least we can do to holistically unravel the impact of mother's love and affection (read mindfulness meditation based on the teaching of the Buddha) and child's development (read well-being, EI, character strengths).

Notably, it is known for a very long time. Again it is worth getting immersed in the (loud) reverberation of the insights by (a) Webb and colleagues (Webb et al., 1966, p. 174), "No single

measurement class is perfect, neither is any scientifically useless" and (b) Denzin (2009, p. 308), "A much more satisfactory form of method triangulation combines dissimilar methods to measure the same unit, what I call between or across-method triangulation. The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies."

Huynh and colleagues (2019), in their critical review of mixed methods studies on mindfulness, point towards the growing acceptance of mixed methods studies in mindfulness given the complexity of the construct, diversity in approaches (MBIs and MMs), and an array of underlying mechanisms that may be decoded by strengthening the meta-inferences (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Notably yet predictably, the critical review reveals that all the 35 mixed methods studies had employed only MBIs (mainly MBSR and MBCT). So, this study presents a unique opportunity to stand tall on the shoulders of the giants to do justice to the teaching of a giant (the Buddha); whose volition was to provide the key to each being to get liberated.

5.1 Mixed Methods Research Typology:

Inspired from the work of Teddlie & Tashakkori (2009, p. 125-127), we enlist 6 criteria that have been used to create MM typologies (based on the work of other authors viz. Creswell et al., 2003; Greene & Caracelli, 1989; Greene et al., 1997; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 1998; Morse, 1991, 2003) and how they have been adapted & applied in this study:

Table 5.1*: MM Typology - Criteria adapted and applied*

No.	Criteria/ design question	Choice (criteria value) in this study
1	Number of methodological approaches	Both Quantitative and Qualitative
2	Number of strands or phases	Multistrand
3	Type of implementation process – Will data collection occur sequentially or in a parallel manner?	Parallel mixed design
4	Stage of integration process – experiential stage only, or across stages, or other combination?	Inferences based on results from each strand are integrated to form meta-inferences at the end of the study
5	Priority of methodological approach – Does QUAN or QUAL component have priority or are they equal in importance, at the onset of the study?	At the onset it was envisaged as QUAN + qual. Eventually both strands gained equal importance *
6	Function of the research	Complementarity and Triangulation (between methods)

Note: Teddlie & Tashakkori consider only the first four criteria to define the typology.

In the past, such parallel mixed design studies have offered a more accurate and comprehensive understanding to effectively meet the ROs. A case in point is the World Bank Guatemala

Poverty Assessment (Rao & Woolcock, 2003), in which both strands (quantitative and qualitative) were kept independent until the completion of data analysis. Integration took place at the meta-inference stage.

Research Objectives (RO):

1. To study the **impact** of Vipassana Mindfulness Meditation on *Well-being, Emotional Intelligence and Character Strengths* amongst **healthy professionals** *(first time meditators)* **during pandemic**
2. To assess the **sustained impact** of Vipassana MM over time [*pre-post-follow-up* (over 15 weeks)]
3. To explicate the *influence* of **sustained experience** of Vipassana on *identity and sense of well-being* amongst **seasoned professionals during pandemic**

Paradigm	**Approach (QUAN + QUAL)**	**RO Addressed**
Positivism	**Experimental design**	RO 1, 2
Constructivist - Interpretivist	**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**	RO 3

5.1.1 Experimental Design

Kirk (2013) advocates that well designed and implemented experiments remain as one of science's most dominant methods for establishing causality. He argued that experiments are characterized by the: (1) manipulation of IV; (2) use of controls; and (3) measurement of DV(s). Thus, Experimental design is most suited approach within the Positivism paradigm to address RO 1 and RO 2.

5.1.2 Phenomenology

"Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11). In psychology, phenomenologists are interested in examining and understanding the lived experience, wherein, as Husserl (1970) argued, the experience is examined as it occurs and in its own terms.

As explained by Shri S N Goenka (Hart, 2011, p. 151) "There are three kinds of wisdom: suta-mayā paññā—'received wisdom gained from listening to others'; cintā-mayā paññā—wisdom gained by intellectual analysis; and bhāvanā-mayā paññā—wisdom developing from direct, personal experience. Of these, only the last can totally purify the mind; it is cultivated by the practice of vipassanā-bhāvanā".

Further he elaborates that through the practice of Vipassana, one experiences the reality of impermanence directly within the framework of the body to cultivate wisdom.

Accordingly, phenomenology (specifically Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as detailed in section 8.1) is the most suited approach within the Constructivist – Interpretivist paradigm to address RO 3.

6 QUANTITATIVE STUDY – EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

6.1 Design

Vipassana MM, as taught by S. N. Goenka, follows the standardized protocol across the globe (refer section 2.4). While MBSR generally comprises of 26 hours of meditation spread across 8 weeks - including 2.5 hours of meditation each week and an all-day class (Carmody, 2009), a 10-days Vipassana course comprises of over 100 hours of meditation.

On account of the rigour of the 10-days Vipassana course (10+ hrs. of meditation alongside one hour of video lecture each day, requirement to observe noble silence and five precepts) and philosophy (self-purification by introspection suits only those having the intention and motivation to scrupulously follow the discipline and work diligently), it would not be practical, ethical or efficacious to compel someone, as per random assignment, to attend their first 10 days Vipassana MM course as a part of the experimental group. Moreover, Shapiro (1992) found that the outcomes of meditation practice are related to the subject's intention or goals/ expectations (you get what you want along the self-regulation, self-exploration and self-liberation continuum) and that the innate motive to learn predicts the learning from intervention (Eby et al., 2019). Vipassana MM, unlike MBIs, aims at liberation from human suffering common to the whole of humankind and developing *mettā bhāvanā*, i.e. loving-kindness or goodwill towards others (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011; Hart, 2011).

Thus, consciously, a quasi-experimental (QE) design that has all of the features of an experimental design except random assignment (Kirk, 2013) was deployed. The following thoughtfully chosen design features, as recommended by Shadish and colleagues (2002), were incorporated in the QE design to aid causal inferences by mitigating the risks to validity: [a] Participants in both the groups (experimental and control) had the intention to practice Vipassana MM, [b] Control group participants did not practice any form of meditation (Freedland et al., 2011), [c] Positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) acted as non-equivalent dependent variables, i.e. unequal effect on PA and NA was anticipated as 'bad is stronger than the good' (Baumeister et al., 2001), and there is an asymmetry between PA and NA relating to reactivity, duration and cognitive processing (Larsen, 2009).

Accordingly, prospective participants identified for the experimental group were those who had got the acceptance to attend their first 10 days Vipassana MM course scheduled between Dec. 2020 and Apr. 2021 at select centres in and around Mumbai, India. On the other hand, prospective participants identified for the control group were those who had signed up for their first 10-days course and got acceptance from similar centres in and around Mumbai in the last 30-60 days (Oct. 2020 to Apr. 2021); but could not attend that course and still had the intention to participate in one, i.e. akin to an intentional waitlist control group.

Method biases influence the results of behavioural research (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To reduce social desirability/ response bias on account of self-report measures, anonymity was maintained through a confidential identifier (Shapiro, Schwartz and Bonner, 1998). To address issues surrounding implementation, as highlighted by Van Dam and colleagues (2017), participants were offered the standardized (across the globe) 10-days course at select centres with the same duration/ protocol/ settings, and the assistant teachers were unaware and hence

blinded to the experimental hypothesis. To eliminate experimenter bias there was no interaction with or involvement of the research team.

6.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used with well-defined inclusion criteria: [a] Working professionals - in service or self-employed [b] Age between 20 to 59 yrs [c] Participants in both the groups (experimental and control) had the intention to practice Vipassana MM (as detailed above). Participants were excluded if they met any of the following criteria: [a] Attended any Vipassana MM course in the past [b] Practicing any other meditation technique [c] Have or had (self-reported) any mental health disorder.

6.3 Procedure

With the help of the Vipassana Research Institute, an invitation was sent by email to prospective participants who met the above-mentioned criteria (experimental and control group). Details of the online survey were sent by the institute to only those who gave their consent and were willing to complete all the surveys over time with no favour or reward in return. Similar instructions were given to both groups.

Participants in the experimental group completed the pre-intervention survey (T0) about 10 days before the commencement of the intervention. As they observed noble silence and were completely cut-off from the world during the course, the post-intervention survey (T1) was sent to them 3 weeks after completion of their first 10-days Vipassana MM course; to enable them to [a] transition from an intensive course held in special conditions to the busyness of everyday normal social life (Falkenström, 2010) and [b] experience and observe changes (if any) and objectively report at T1. To match the time gap, a duration of 6 weeks was planned between T0 and T1 in the case of the control group.

Likewise, the follow-up survey (T2) was sent to both groups after a passage of another 12 weeks (i.e., 3 months between T1 and T2).

6.4 Operationalization

The constructs were operationalized to facilitate scale identification and refinement for the survey research.

6.4.1 Mindfulness

The awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 291).

Mindfulness may be described as **lucid awareness of the phenomenal field**; that enables the practitioner to see & clearly comprehend the nature (i.e. impermanence – arising as the result of a cause, and then passing away) of all phenomena, bodily and mental. And it includes the repeated application of this awareness, to each experience of life (Bodhi, 2011, p. 22 ; Rhys Davids, 1910, p. 322).

This definition is more holistic and aligned to the teaching of the Buddha.

6.4.2 Well-Being

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a multifaceted construct comprising affective and cognitive components (Diener, 2000). Affective well-being refers to the frequency and intensity with which one experiences affect (positive and negative) as specific emotions in the present or as general (trait-like) mood, while Cognitive well-being refers to reflective assessment or cognitive judgment of one's sense of the quality of life, e.g. life satisfaction (Luhmann, 2017; Schulte et al., 2015).

On the other hand, PWB is more about being able to realize one's potential. PWB or flourishing, grounded in a eudaimonic view of well-being, is characterized by self-acceptance, a sense of purpose in life, positive social relationships, competence, personal growth and engagement, i.e. positive social-psychological aspects of well-being beneficial to human functioning (Diener et al., 2010; Ryff, 1989). With growing emphasis on positive psychology, experts advocate that flourishing is not only the absence and opposite of mental health problems like anxiety and depression, but also the fundamental ingredient of a purposeful, meaningful and fulfilling life that leads to positive human development (Yildirim, 2019).

6.4.3 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence, as per the trait model, is a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality (Petrides, 2000).

6.4.4 Character Strengths

Character strengths are positive, morally valued traits of personality (Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Park, 2003).

6.5 Hypotheses Development

6.5.1 Mechanisms to Enhance SWB

Enhanced levels of mindfulness are associated with positive outcomes in several life domains, including health (physical, mental), vitality, satisfaction (life and job), self-concept, emotional intelligence and relationships (Brown et al., 2007; Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012; Schlechta Portella et al., 2021). More specifically, it is well established that mindfulness is associated with and predicts enhanced SWB (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Howell et al., 2008; Brown et al., 2009).

There is evidence that trait emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between mindfulness and both the dimensions of SWB (Schutte & Malouff, 2011; Coffey et al., 2010). This is consistent with substantial research that sheds light on the connection between mindfulness and emotional intelligence (Baer et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2007, 2009; Koole, 2009; Chu, 2010; Charoensukmongkol, 2014), and that higher levels of emotional intelligence is associated with and predicts enhanced subjective well-being - both affective and cognitive (Schutte et al., 2002; Brackett et al., 2004; Austin et al., 2005). This pathway gains greater prominence in light of the meta-analyses indicating that emotional intelligence predicts job performance beyond cognitive ability and personality (D. L. Joseph & Newman, 2010; O'Boyle et al., 2011).

In a recent meta-analysis of correlational studies and RCTs, Chu and Mak (2020) indicated that mindfulness correlated with meaning in life, and showed how MBIs had a positive effect on the presence of meaning in life. Previous research also shows that meaning in life is positively associated with and predicts life satisfaction viz. cognitive well-being (Halama & Dědová, 2007; Ho et al., 2010). The role of meaning in life is vital in coping with uncertainty and life-threatening experiences (Frankl, 2000; Korkmaz & Güloğlu, 2021).

6.5.2 Mechanisms to enhance PWB

Presence of meaning or purpose in life is associated with the eudaimonic approach, as it offers a sense of direction and intentionality for optimal psychological functioning (Krok, 2015; Ryff, 1989). Meaning provides a way to accept reality, develop resilience in the face of adversity, and strive towards a goal in the future.

Thriving may be reinforced by gratitude that connects one positively to the past (through reinterpretation or cognitive reorientation by practising positive thinking) and facilitates integration (Kini et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2007). Gratitude gives one the eyes to see the unseen and experience the unfelt.

On the other hand, hope connects one happily and energetically to the future. It enables one to grow continually by looking forward to possibilities in the face of challenges. Hope consistently yielded the highest association (amongst the 24 character strengths) with well-being across all life stages represented by different age groups (Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2014).

6.5.3 Mindfulness as a mediator

In the systematic review and meta-analysis of mediation studies on how MBIs improves well-being, Gu and colleagues (2015, p. 5) suggested, “Generally, findings showed support for mindfulness as a mediator, regardless of heterogeneity in measures of mindfulness, sample characteristics and outcomes. As evidence for mindfulness as a mechanism was found in both simple and multiple mediator analyses.” Given the vast differences between MMs and MBIs (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011) and challenges in operationalizing and measuring mindfulness (Van Dam et al., 2017), this question warrants examination.

Thus, there is a dearth of causal studies that examine the specific and serial indirect effects of MMs on [a] affective well-being via mindfulness and trait emotional intelligence, [b] cognitive well-being via mindfulness and trait emotional intelligence as well as the presence of meaning and [c] psychological well-being via mindfulness and presence of meaning as well as select character strengths (viz. hope and gratitude). This study aims to address this gap, i.e., examining the impact ('what' and 'how') of Vipassana MM in healthy professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.6 Measures

Participants independently completed an online survey at T0, T1 and T2 comprising of the following measures:

Table 6.1: *Details of Scales Administered*

Construct	Scale (Developed by)	No of Items (Scale pts.)	Cronbach's alpha (Pre, Post)	Sample Item (Sub-Scale)
Mindfulness (MF)	FFMQ (Baer et al., 2008)	15 (5)	0.80, 0.83	When I have distressing thoughts or images, I just notice them and let them go (Non-reactivity)
Affective well-being (SWB)	PANAS (Watson, Clark & Tellegan 1988)	20 (5)	0.90, 0.91 (NA) 0.85, 0.89 (PA)	Scared (NA – Negative Affect), Enthusiastic (PA – Positive Affect)
Cognitive well-being (SWB)	Satisfaction with Life (Diener et al., 1985)	5 (7)	0.86, 0.86	In most ways my life is close to my ideal
PWB	Flourishing (Diener et al., 2010)	8 (7)	0.89, 0.93	I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others
Meaning in Life	MLQ (Steger et al., 2006)	10 (7)	0.88, 0.93	My life has a clear sense of purpose (Presence of Meaning)
Trait EI (EI)	TEIQue – SF (Petrides, 2009)	30 (7)	0.91, 0.92	I usually find it difficult to regulate my emotions (SC - Self Control)
Character strengths	VIA-72 (Peterson and Seligman, 2004)	24 (5)	0.71 – 0.87, 0.73 – 0.87	I feel thankful for what I have received in life (GRA - Gratitude)

Control Variables: As recommended by extant literature, age and gender (Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2014; Kong & Zhao, 2013; Gohil & Charak, 2013; Petrides & Furnham, 2006; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2001) were controlled. They were used as covariates during statistical analyses.

6.7 Statistical Analyses Strategy

To study the impact of Vipassana MM on each dependent variable (DV) viz. positive affect (PA), negative affect (NA), life satisfaction (LS), trait emotional intelligence (EI), presence of meaning (PM) and mindfulness (MF), a 2x3 mixed design MANCOVA (Kirk, 2013; Verma, 2016) was used, in line with similar research on mindfulness (Mrazek et al., 2013). The analysis was conducted in SPSS v26. Group x time interaction effect was analyzed with the group (Vipassana MM vs. control group) entered as between-subjects factor and time (pre-intervention at T0, post-intervention at T1, follow-up at T2) entered as a within-subjects factor. Age and gender (dummy coded) were used as covariates.

Effect size estimates were obtained by comparing scores at T0 and T1 for each DV for each group. Cohen's d was computed using gain scores (post minus pre) and pooled standard deviations as detailed earlier (Cohen, 1988).

Mediation analysis was used to uncover the underlying processes that causally link Vipassana MM to dimensions of subjective well-being (PA, NA and LS). Subsequent to the causal-steps approach to testing the significance of a sequence of linear regression models (Baron & Kenny, 1986), bootstrapping method is a prevalent and recommended method to test the significance of indirect effects in mediation analysis, as it balances validity and power considerations, and accounts for the irregularity in the sampling distribution of the indirect effects (MacKinnon et al., 2002; Hayes, 2022).

In line with the a priori hypotheses and previous mediation studies on mindfulness (Gu et al., 2015; Sevel et al., 2020; Sanilevici et al., 2021), path diagram 1 (Figure 6.1) was used to investigate the treatment effect of Vipassana MM (X) on change (post-intervention minus pre-intervention scores) in positive affect ($\Delta Y = \Delta PA = PA_{T1} - PA_{T0}$) and change in negative affect ($\Delta Y = \Delta NA$), separately, through changes in mediators viz. change in mindfulness (ΔMF) and change in emotional intelligence (ΔEI).

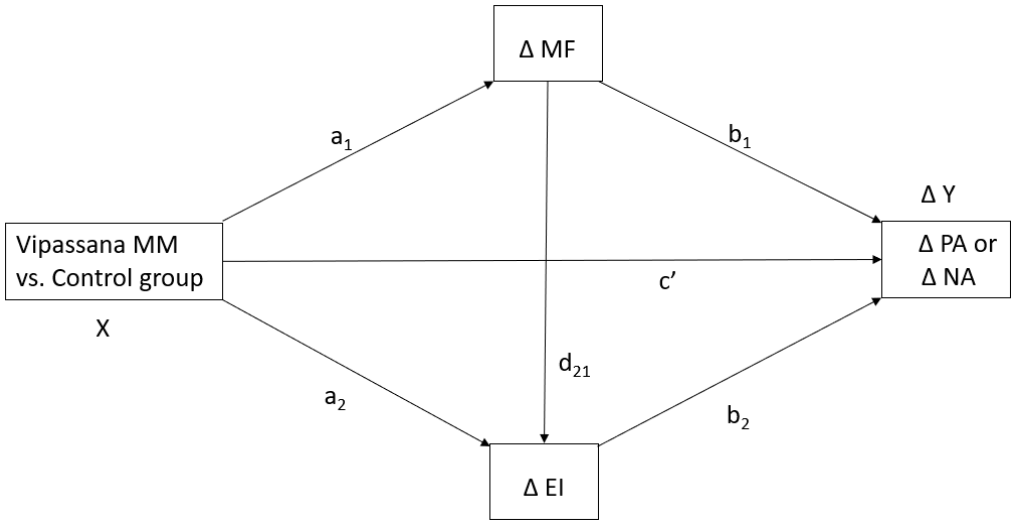

Figure 6.1: *Serial Multiple Mediator Model to Examine the Effect of Vipassana MM (X) on Change in Affective Well-Being (ΔPA or ΔNA) through Changes in Mediators viz. ΔMF and ΔEI*

Likewise, path diagram 2 (Figure 6.2) was used to investigate the effect of Vipassana MM (X) on change in life satisfaction (ΔY= ΔLS) through changes in mediators viz. change in mindfulness (ΔMF), change in emotional intelligence (ΔEI) and change in presence of meaning (ΔPM).

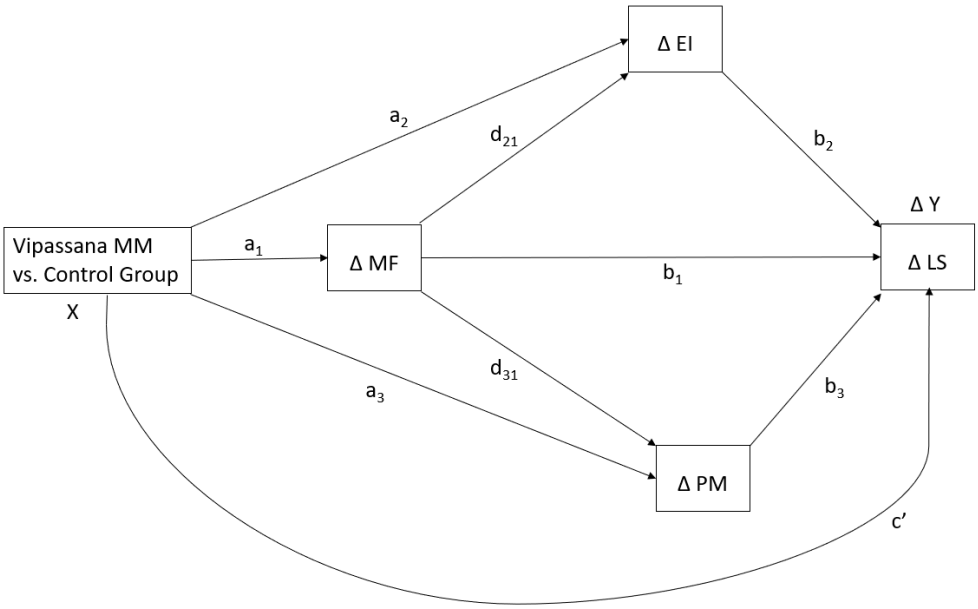

Figure 6.2: *Serial Multiple Mediator Model to Examine the Effect of Vipassana MM (X) on Change in Cognitive Well-Being (ΔLS) through Changes in Mediators viz. ΔMF, ΔPM and ΔEI*

Likewise, path diagram 3 (Figure 6.3) was used to investigate the effect of Vipassana MM (X) on change in flourishing (ΔY= ΔFLO) through changes in mediators viz. ΔMF, ΔPM, ΔHOP and ΔGRA.

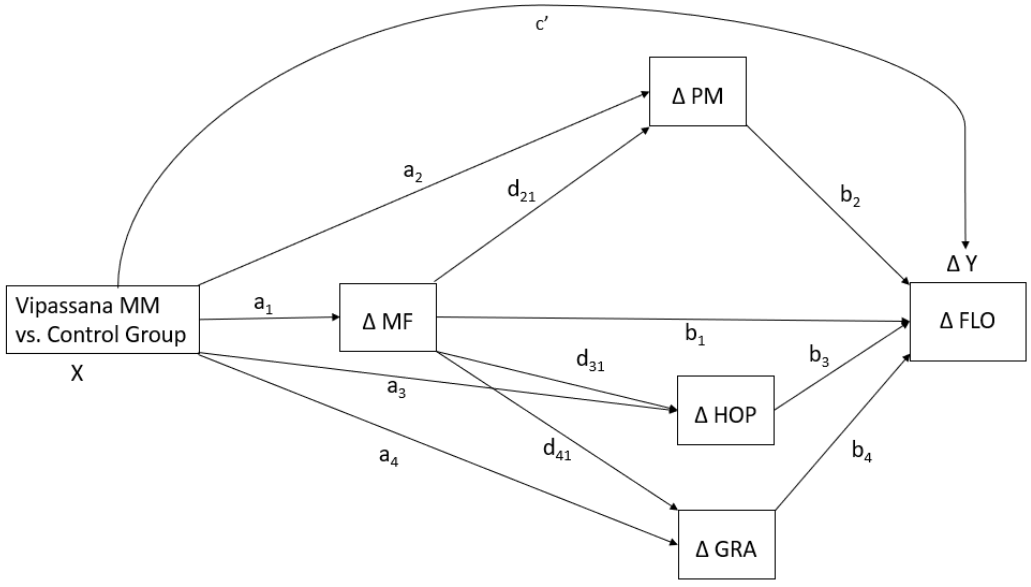

Figure 6.3: *Serial Multiple Mediator Model to Examine the Effect of Vipassana MM (X) on Change in Flourishing (ΔLS) through Changes in Mediators viz. ΔMF, ΔPM, ΔHOP and ΔGRA*

Age and gender were incorporated as covariates, though not shown in the path diagrams to save space and improve clarity.

Mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2022, version 4) in SPSS v26. Serial multiple mediation models (model 6 for path diagram 1 and model 81 for path diagram 2) were used in the macro to study the direct and indirect effects.

6.8 Respondents

One hundred fifty-four healthy professionals participated in this study during the pandemic. They were engaged as a part of the experimental group (n=77) and control group (n=77).

As seen in Table 5.1, there was no significant difference in the demographic characteristics of the participants from both the groups relating to gender (p=0.73), marital status (p=0.08), employment status (p=0.24), highest educational qualification (p=0.24) and age (p=0.17). As Vipassana MM is non-sectarian, details relating to ethnicity, caste or religion were not sought.

Table 6.2: *Group-Wise Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristic	**Control (n=77)**	**Vipassana MM (n=77)**	**t / χ^2**	**p**
Gender - Female, Male	24, 53	26, 51	0.12	0.73
Marital Status - Single, Married	28, 49	18, 59	3.1	0.08
Employment - Service, Self-employed	52, 25	45, 32	1.37	0.24
Education† - Graduate, Post-Graduate	32, 45	25, 52	1.37	0.24
Age: mean (SD) min – max (yrs.)	38.18 (9.01) 24 - 59	40.22 (9.25) 23 - 58	-1.39	0.17

Count reported for all categorical characteristics

† Education: Highest educational qualification

7 RESULTS (QUANTITATIVE)

Out of 236 participants who consented to participate in the study:

1. Data relating to 154 participants who completed all the surveys was considered (after removal of outliers) for the final analysis
2. Attrition analysis conducted using t-test revealed no significant baseline difference between dropouts and nondropouts on any measure
3. There was no missing data and all assumptions were met to carry out statistical analyses

7.1 Intercorrelations

In line with the earlier research, significant correlations were found between the study dependent variables (Kong & Zhao, 2013; Kong et al., 2019; Chu & Mak, 2020; Liu et al., 2021) at T0 (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: *Correlations between Study Variables at Pre-Intervention (T0)*

	Var	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	**MF**†	1													
2	**PA**	.395***	1												
3	**NA**	-.53***	-.28***	1											
4	**LS**	.410***	.243**	-.498***	1										
5	**FLO**	.455***	.380***	-.464***	.437***	1									
6	**PM**	.310***	.314***	.250**	.379***	.524***	1								
7	**EI_G**	.696***	.455***	-.632***	.543***	.626***	.363***	1							
8	**HOP**	.330***	.277***	-.298***	.219**	.565***	.426***	.415***	1						
9	**GRA**	.407***	.231**	-.266***	.358***	.561***	.367***	.459***	.496***	1					
10	**ZES**	.350***	.379***	-0.238**	.283***	.558***	.478***	.408***	.570***	.586***	1				
11	**CUR**	.412***	.464***	-.274***	.327***	.612***	.323***	.472***	.436***	.501***	.589***	1			
12	**LOV**	.343***	.231**	-0.125	.217**	.476***	.305***	.398***	.327***	.435***	.454***	.467***	1		
13	**KIN**	0.109	.164*	-0.144	0.057	.393***	0.128	.320***	.274***	.305***	.255**	.466***	.401***	1	
14	**JUD**	.259**	.306***	-.239**	0.151	.372***	.310***	.358***	.280***	.302***	.275***	.382***	.238**	.275***	1
15	**PER**	.283***	.342***	-.305***	.178*	.398***	.180*	.351***	.325***	0.131	.228**	.291***	0.068	.228**	.207**

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

† MF: Combined score on four facets (excluding ‘Observing’) of FFMQ

7.2 Impact of Vipassana MM

A group x time interaction effect represents a statistically significant difference in the mean differences (or Cohen's d estimates). Other than the character strength Kindness (KIN), results showed that the interaction effect was significant ($p<0.01$) for all DVs viz. SWB (PA, NA, LS), PWB (FLO) trait emotional intelligence (EI), presence of meaning (PM), character strengths (HOP, GRA, ZES, LOV, CUR, PER, JUD) and mindfulness (MF). Group-wise estimated means at T0 and T1 alongside effect sizes (Cohen's d) are detailed in Table 7.2, while those at T0 and T2 alongside effect sizes are detailed in Table 7.3. In sync with the extant convention (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996), effect sizes for significant improvement (decrease in NA and increase in other DVs from T0 to T1/ T2) have been reported as positive in sign. As seen in Table 7.2, Vipassana MM led to significant improvement from T0 to T1 in SWB (d: 0.33 to 0.96), PM (d=0.77), trait EI (d=0.82), Character Strengths (d: 0.26 to 0.40), and MF (d=0.83). As seen in Table 7.2, in the case of the control group, there was a significant deterioration from T0 to T1 in PA, select character strengths and FLO. The interaction effect has been sustained from T0 to T2 over 15 weeks as seen in Table 7.3. Figure 7.1 shows the interaction effect owing to Vipassana MM over time i.e., pre-post vs pre-follow-up.

Table 7.2: *Group x Time Interaction Effect: Estimated Means at T0 & T1 and Effect Sizes*

DV	T0 (Pre intervention)			T1 (Post intervention)			Interaction (Pre-Post)	Effect size (Cohen's d)	
	Mean‡ (Ctrl.)	Mean (Exp.)	S.E.	Mean (Ctrl.)	Mean (Exp.)	S.E.	F (1, 150)	Exp.	Ctrl.
PA	37.88	37.02	0.59	36.69	38.78	0.64	12.71***	0.33	-0.22
NA	22.83	24.32	0.90	22.97	17.38	0.74	45.47***	0.96	
LS	22.75	22.03	0.63	22.74	25.36	0.57	19.12***	0.63	
PM	24.02	22.93	0.67	23.54	27.25	0.62	27.08***	0.77	
EI_G	4.62	4.63	0.08	4.65	5.20	0.08	39.42***	0.82	
PER	4.06	3.90	0.09	3.88	4.14	0.08	13.21***	0.31	-0.24
HOP	4.22	4.22	0.07	4.08	4.39	0.07	14.77***	0.30	-0.24
KIN	4.31	4.41	0.06	4.20	4.39	0.07	1.26	-0.03	-0.19
CUR	3.99	4.03	0.07	3.84	4.27	0.08	15.56***	0.35	-0.22
GRA	4.06	4.11	0.07	3.93	4.36	0.07	15.89***	0.40	-0.22
ZES	3.87	3.98	0.09	3.75	4.23	0.08	13.8***	0.34	-0.16
LOV	3.99	3.99	0.08	3.85	4.17	0.07	10.69**	0.27	-0.21
JUD	4.14	3.97	0.07	4.04	4.13	0.07	9.58**	0.26	-0.17
FLO	44.96	44.50	0.64	42.90	47.50	0.68	27.95***	0.52	-0.35
MF†	3.18	3.04	0.06	3.21	3.49	0.06	22.51***	0.83	

** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$

† MF: Combined score on four facets (excluding 'Observing') of FFMQ

‡ Estimated means and standard errors are computed with age and gender as the covariates

Table 7.3: *Group x Time Interaction Effect: Estimated Means at T0 & T2 and Effect Sizes*

DV	T0 (Pre intervention)			T2 (Follow-up)			Interaction (Pre-Follow-up)	Effect size (Cohen's d)	
	Mean‡ (Ctrl.)	Mean (Exp.)	S.E.	Mean (Ctrl.)	Mean (Exp.)	S.E.	F (1, 150)	Exp.	Ctrl.
PA	37.88	37.02	0.59	37.03	39.17	0.68	11.85***	0.39	-0.15
NA	22.83	24.32	0.90	22.85	18.65	0.80	24.48***	-0.76	
LS	22.75	22.03	0.63	23.28	25.78	0.57	18.82***	0.71	
PM	24.02	22.93	0.67	24.69	27.86	0.58	23.94***	0.90	
EI_G	4.62	4.63	0.08	4.68	5.19	0.09	24***	0.77	
PER	4.06	3.90	0.09	3.95	4.14	0.10	14.84***	0.29	
HOP	4.22	4.22	0.07	4.18	4.49	0.07	14.78***	0.46	
KIN	4.31	4.41	0.06	4.20	4.46	0.07	3.2	0.09	-0.18
CUR	3.99	4.03	0.07	3.88	4.22	0.08	8.51**	0.28	-0.16
GRA	4.06	4.11	0.07	4.04	4.38	0.07	10.02**	0.41	
ZES	3.87	3.98	0.09	3.83	4.24	0.09	8.79**	0.35	
LOV	3.99	3.99	0.08	3.95	4.24	0.08	8.16**	0.36	
JUD	4.14	3.97	0.07	4.11	4.30	0.07	14.53***	0.53	
FLO	44.96	44.50	0.64	44.38	48.02	0.72	20.19***	0.59	
MF†	3.18	3.04	0.06	3.26	3.54	0.06	22.96***	0.88	

** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

† MF: Combined score on four facets (excluding 'Observing') of FFMQ

‡ Estimated means and standard errors are computed with age and gender as the covariates

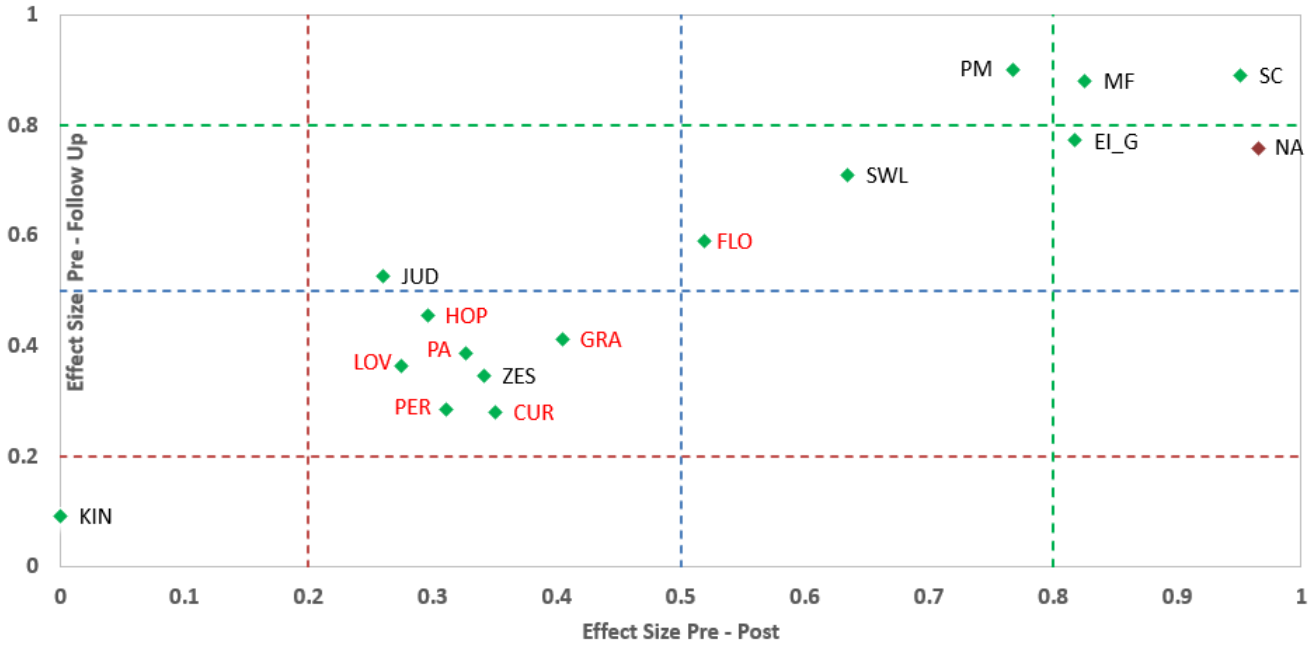

Figure 7.1: *Interaction Effect of Vipassana MM over time*

Interestingly, as deducible from estimated means shown in Tables 7.2 and 7.3, the trend lines crossed over for most of the DVs (except select traits), i.e., the means were reliably different in one direction at T0 and in the opposite direction at T1/ T2 across the two groups. Such a pattern of observed outcomes is particularly amenable to causal interpretation in the case of quasi-experimental design (Shadish et al., 2002).

Further, simple main effect (SME) between-subjects analysis showed that at T0 there was no significant difference between the two groups on any DV viz. $p>0.05$, signifying little likelihood of initial selection bias on account of non-randomization (Shadish et al., 2002). SME within-subjects analysis showed that there was a significant improvement in the experimental group on all DVs ($p<0.01$), while there was deterioration in the control group on most DVs (though not significant, except for PA).

The results provide strong evidence for a significant positive impact of Vipassana MM on well-being, trait EI, presence of meaning and mindfulness in healthy professionals during the pandemic.

7.3 Serial Mediation to predict enhanced Well-Being

Serial mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro (models 6 and 81) in SPSS as detailed above.

7.3.1 Predicting enhanced SWB (Pre-Post):

Direct effects are displayed in Figures 7.2, 7.4 & 7.6, and indirect effects are reported in Tables 7.4 & 7.5, respectively. As seen, there was evidence of an indirect effect of Vipassana MM via increase in trait EI on enhanced subjective well-being (a_ib_i, bootstrap 95% CIs not containing zero, effect scaling: P_M) viz. increase in PA (1.33, CI [0.59, 2.24], 0.45), decrease in NA (-1.18, CI [-2.35, -0.25], 0.17), and increase in LS (1.24, CI [0.59, 2.03], 0.37). Likewise, there was evidence of an indirect effect of Vipassana MM on increase in LS via increase in PM (0.89, CI [0.29, 1.69], 0.27).

There was evidence for serial indirect effects of Vipassana MM (X) on enhanced dimensions of SWB first via increase in mindfulness (ΔMF) and then increase in EI or increase in PM ($a_1d_{i1}b_i$, bootstrap 95% CIs not containing zero, P_M) viz. X→ΔMF→ΔEI→ΔPA (0.78, CI [0.30, 1.44], 0.26), X→ΔMF→ΔEI→ΔNA (-0.69, CI [-1.54, -0.14], 0.10), X→ΔMF→ΔEI→ΔLS ($a_1d_{21}b_2$ = 0.73, CI [0.31, 1.35], 0.22), X→ΔMF→ΔPM→ΔLS (0.26, CI [0.05, 0.59], 0.08).

***Table 7.4**: Indirect Effects of Vipassana MM on Affective Well-Being (Pre-Post)*

		Model 1: ΔY = ΔPA¶					Model 2: ΔY = ΔNA^				
Model Pathway	**Coeff.†**	**Effect‡**	**S.E.**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**	**P_M§**	**Effect**	**S.E.**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**	**P_M**
1: X -> ΔMF -> ΔY	a_1b_1	0.22	0.30	-0.44	0.76		-0.64	0.49	-1.69	0.26	
2: X -> ΔEI -> ΔY	a_2b_2	1.33	0.42	0.59	2.24	0.45	-1.18	0.54	-2.35	-0.25	0.17
3: X -> ΔMF -> ΔEI -> ΔY	$a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.78	0.30	0.30	1.44	0.26	-0.69	0.35	-1.54	-0.14	0.10
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 3)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.55	0.45	-0.34	1.43		-0.49	0.43	-1.45	0.31	
		Model 1: F (5, 148) = 10.14, p < .001, R^2 = 0.26, MSE = 21.34.					*Model 2: F (5, 148) = 16.02, p < .001, R^2 = 0.35, MSE = 36.85.*				

Abbreviations: X: Vipassana MM vs Control group; Δ: Change in scores (T1-T0); Y: Affective Well-being; S.E.: Bootstrap 95% Standard Error; LLCI & ULCI: Bootstrap 95% Confidence Intervals; Ind: Indirect effect
† Coeff.: Path coefficients and direct effects as shown in Figure 6.1. ‡ Unstandardized coefficient
§ P_M: Ratio of indirect effect to total effect

***Table 7.5:** Indirect Effects of Vipassana MM on Cognitive Well-Being (Pre-Post)*

		Model 3: ΔY = ΔLS¶				
Model Pathway	**Coeff.†**	**Effect‡**	**S.E.**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**	**P_M§**
1: X -> ΔMF -> ΔY	a_1b_1	-0.28	0.33	-1.04	0.27	
2: X -> ΔEI -> ΔY	a_2b_2	1.24	0.37	0.59	2.03	0.37
3: X -> ΔPM -> ΔY	a_3b_3	0.89	0.36	0.29	1.69	0.27
4: X -> ΔMF -> ΔEI -> ΔY	$a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.73	0.27	0.31	1.35	0.22
5: X -> ΔMF -> ΔPM -> ΔY	$a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.26	0.14	0.05	0.59	0.08
Contrast (Ind 2 - Ind 3)	a_2b_2 - a_3b_3	0.35	0.55	-0.73	1.46	
Contrast (Ind 2 - Ind 4)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.51	0.41	-0.33	1.33	
Contrast (Ind 2 - Ind 5)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.98	0.42	0.19	1.87	
Contrast (Ind 3 - Ind 4)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.16	0.50	-0.81	1.17	
Contrast (Ind 3 - Ind 5)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.63	0.36	0.03	1.45	
Contrast (Ind 4 - Ind 5)	$a_1d_{21}b_2$ - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.47	0.26	0.06	1.06	

Full model: F (6, 147) = 16.34, p < .001, R^2 = 0.40, MSE = 15.37.
Abbreviations: X: Vipassana MM vs Control group; Δ: Change in scores (T1-T0); Y: Cognitive Well-being; S.E.: Bootstrap 95% Standard Error; LLCI & ULCI: Bootstrap 95% Confidence Intervals; Ind: Indirect effect
† Coeff.: Path coefficients as shown in Figure 6.2. ‡ Unstandardized coefficient
§ P_M: Ratio of indirect effect to total effect

7.3.2 Predicting enhanced SWB (Pre-Follow up):

Direct effects are displayed in Figures 7.3, 7.5 & 7.7, and indirect effects are reported in Tables 7.6 & 7.7, respectively. As seen, there was evidence of an indirect effect of Vipassana MM via increase in trait EI on enhanced subjective well-being (a_ib_i, bootstrap 95% CIs not containing zero, effect scaling: P_M) viz. increase in PA (0.62, CI [0.07, 1.45], 0.21), decrease in NA

(-0.79, CI [-1.71, -0.11], 0.14), and increase in LS (0.65, CI [0.11, 1.28], 0.20). Likewise, there was evidence of an indirect effect of Vipassana MM on increase in LS via increase in PM (1.02, CI [0.38, 1.87], 0.32).

There was evidence for serial indirect effects of Vipassana MM (X) on enhanced dimensions of SWB first via increase in mindfulness (ΔMF) and then increase in EI or increase in PM ($a_1d_{i1}b_i$, bootstrap 95% CIs not containing zero, P_M) viz. X→ΔMF→ΔEI→ΔPA (0.77, CI [0.20, 1.61], 0.26), X→ΔMF→ΔEI→ΔNA (-0.99, CI [-2.11 -0.26], 0.17), X→ΔMF→ΔEI→ΔLS ($a_1d_{21}b_2$ = 0.81, CI [0.31, 1.55], 0.25), X→ΔMF→ΔPM→ΔLS (0.36, CI [0.06, 0.82], 0.11).

Independent of the indirect effects, there was no evidence that Vipassana MM influenced change in PA (c' = 0.63, p > 0.05 for Pre-Post; c' = 1.03, p > 0.05 for Pre-Follow-up) or change in LS (c' = 0.51, p > 0.05 for Pre-Post; c' = 0.82, p > 0.05 for Pre-Follow-up), i.e. full mediation, however, there was evidence (direct effect) that Vipassana MM influenced decrease in NA (c' = -4.58, p < 0.001 for Pre-Post; c' = -2.83, p < 0.05 for Pre-Follow-up), i.e. partial mediation.

***Table 7.6**: Indirect Effects of Vipassana MM on Affective Well-Being (Pre-Follow-up)*

		Model 1: ΔY = ΔPA¶					**Model 2: ΔY = ΔNA^**				
Model Pathway	**Coeff.†**	**Effect‡**	**S.E.**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**	**P_M§**	**Effect**	**S.E.**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**	**P_M**
1: X -> ΔMF -> ΔY	a_1b_1	0.59	0.43	-0.16	1.52		-1.08	0.60	-2.38	0.04	
2: X -> ΔEI -> ΔY	a_2b_2	0.62	0.36	0.07	1.45	0.21	-0.79	0.42	-1.71	-0.11	0.14
3: X -> ΔMF -> ΔEI -> ΔY	$a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.77	0.36	0.20	1.61	0.26	-0.99	0.48	-2.11	-0.26	0.17
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 3)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	-0.15	0.41	-1.07	0.61		0.19	0.54	-0.70	1.48	
		Model 1: F (5, 148) = 10.61, p < .001, R^2 = 0.26, MSE = 24.16.					*Model 2: F (5, 148) = 14.11, p < .001, R^2 = 0.32, MSE = 40.27.*				

***Table 7.7**: Indirect Effects of Vipassana MM on Cognitive Well-Being (Pre-Follow-up)*

		Model 3: ΔY = ΔLS¶				
Model Pathway	**Coeff.†**	**Effect‡**	**S.E.**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**	**P_M§**
1: X -> ΔMF -> ΔY	a_1b_1	-0.44	0.32	-1.15	0.13	
2: X -> ΔEI -> ΔY	a_2b_2	0.65	0.30	0.11	1.28	0.20
3: X -> ΔPM -> ΔY	a_3b_3	1.02	0.38	0.38	1.87	0.32
4: X -> ΔMF -> ΔEI -> ΔY	$a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.81	0.32	0.31	1.55	0.25
5: X -> ΔMF -> ΔPM -> ΔY	$a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.36	0.19	0.06	0.82	0.11
Contrast (Ind 2 - Ind 3)	a_2b_2 - a_3b_3	-0.37	0.47	-1.34	0.51	
Contrast (Ind 2 - Ind 4)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	-0.16	0.42	-1.11	0.57	
Contrast (Ind 2 - Ind 5)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.29	0.38	-0.44	1.04	
Contrast (Ind 3 - Ind 4)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.21	0.54	-0.87	1.29	
Contrast (Ind 3 - Ind 5)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.66	0.42	-0.13	1.56	
Contrast (Ind 4 - Ind 5)	$a_1d_{21}b_2$ - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.45	0.30	-0.07	1.13	

Full model: F (6, 147) = 19.46, p < .001, R^2 = 0.44, MSE = 13.55.

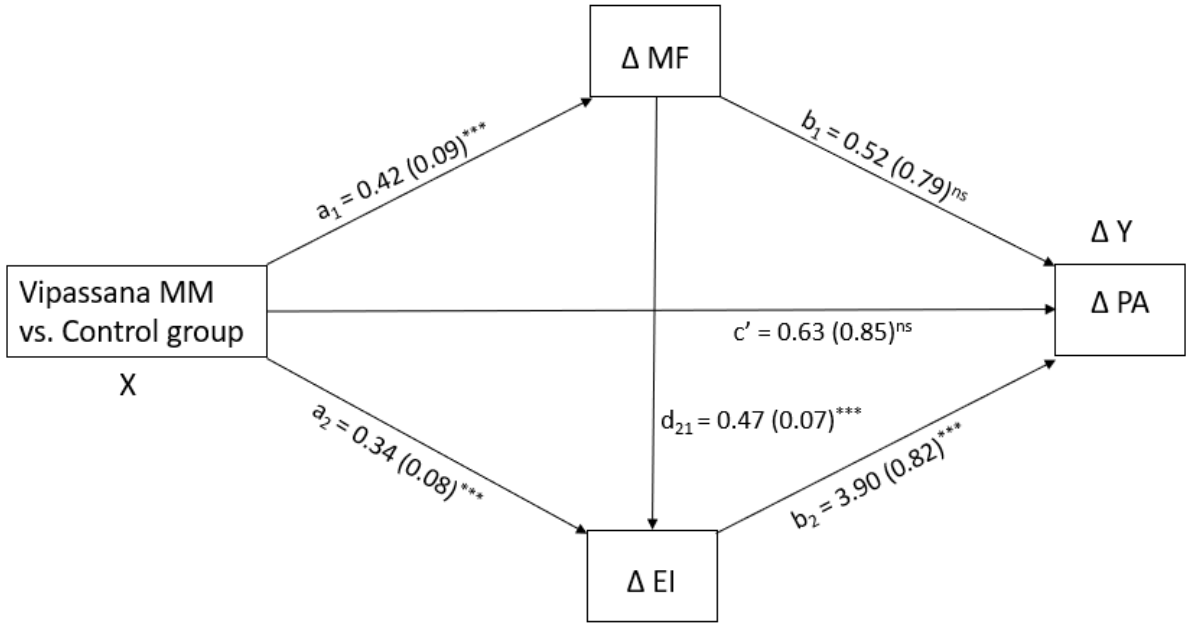

Figure 7.2 (Pre-Post): *Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) of a Serial Multiple Mediator Model Predicting Increase in Positive Affect (ΔPA). S.E. Displayed in Parenthesis;*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

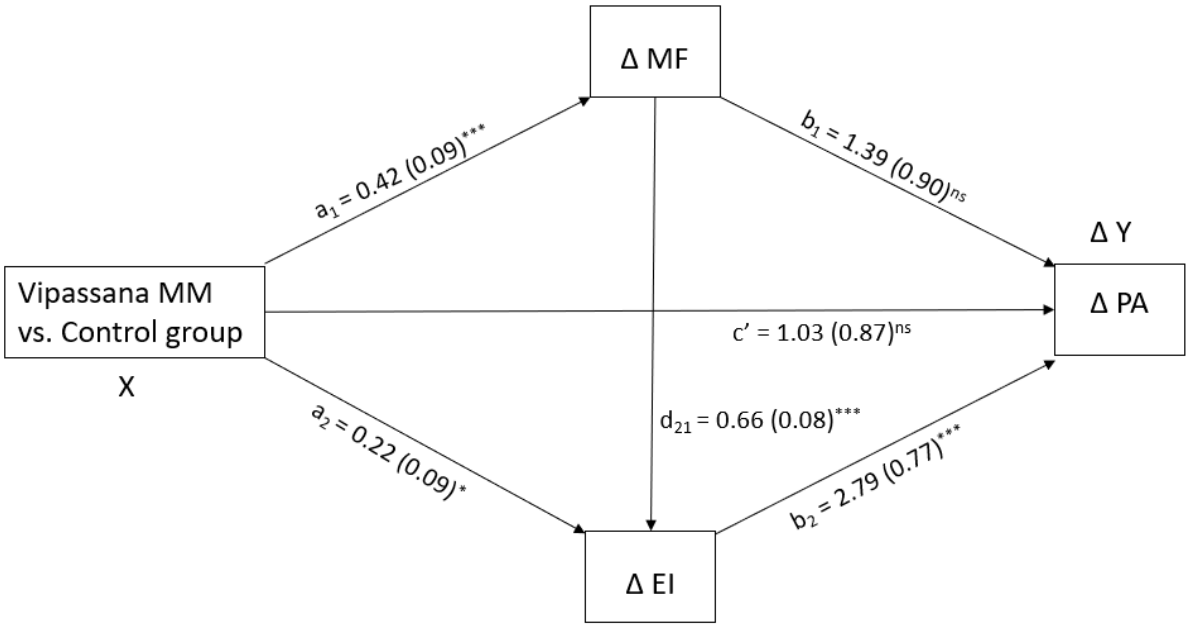

Figure 7.3 (Pre-Follow-up): *Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) of a Serial Multiple Mediator Model Predicting Increase in Positive Affect (ΔPA). S.E. Displayed in Parenthesis;*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

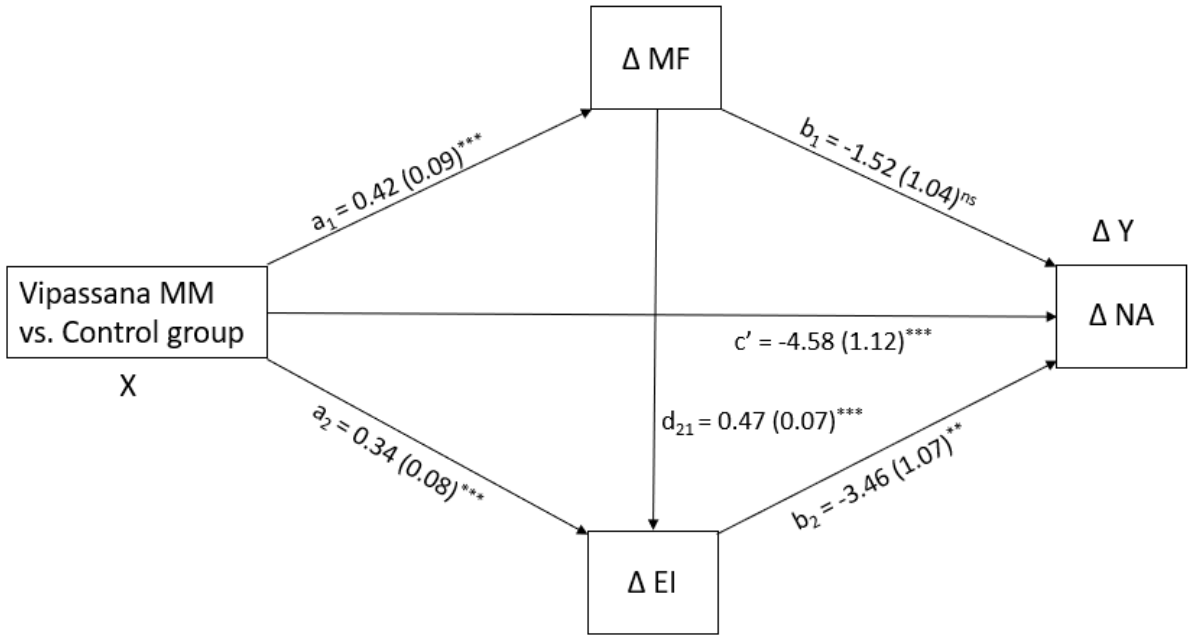

Figure 7.4 (Pre-Post): *Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) of a Serial Multiple Mediator Model Predicting Decrease in Negative Affect (ΔNA). S.E. Displayed in Parenthesis;*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

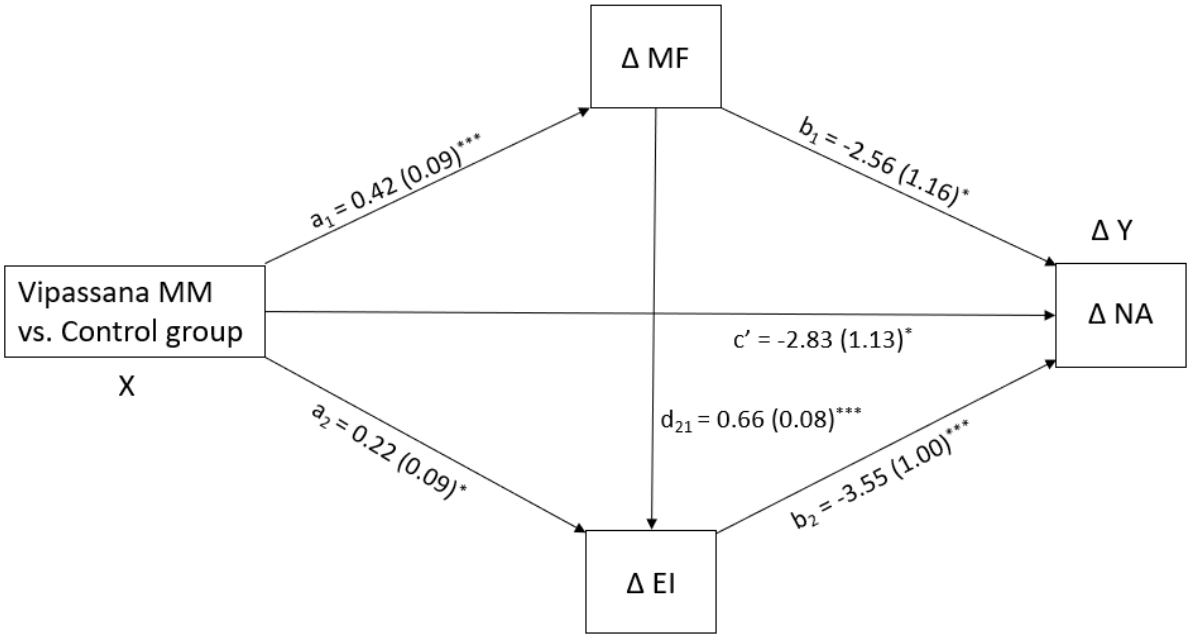

Figure 7.5 (Pre-Follow-up): *Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) of a Serial Multiple Mediator Model Predicting Decrease in Negative Affect (ΔNA). S.E. Displayed in Parenthesis;*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

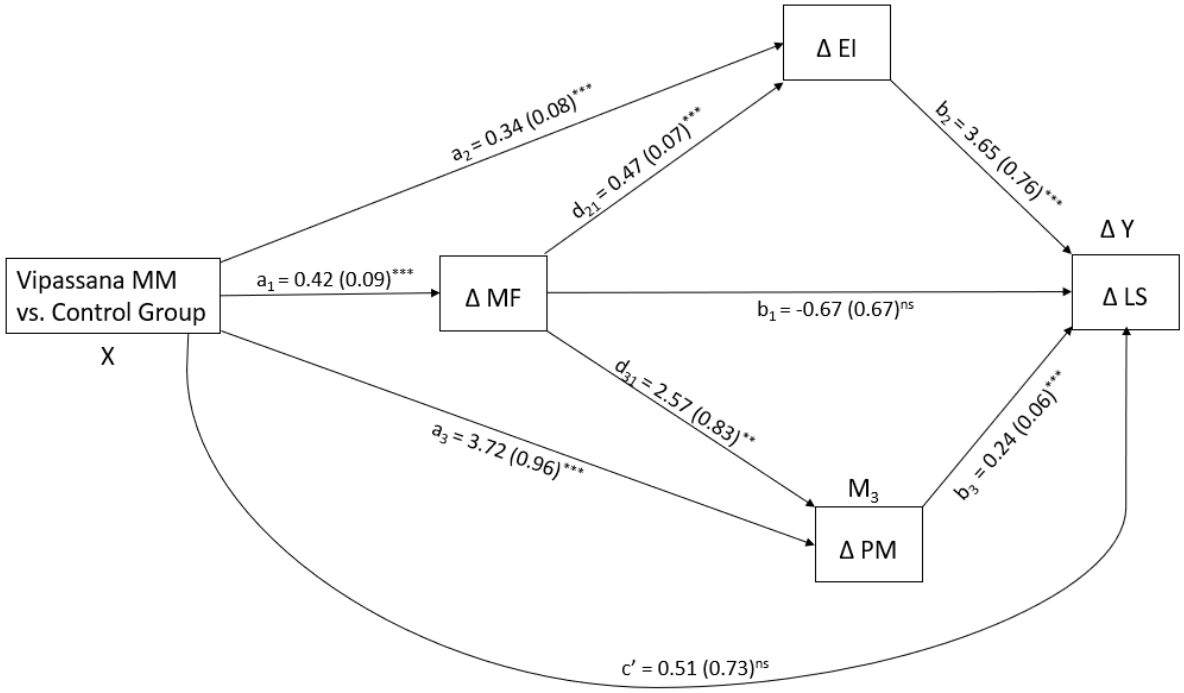

Figure 7.6 (Pre-Post): *Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) of a Serial Multiple Mediator Model Predicting Increase in Life Satisfaction (ΔLS). S.E. Displayed in Parenthesis;*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

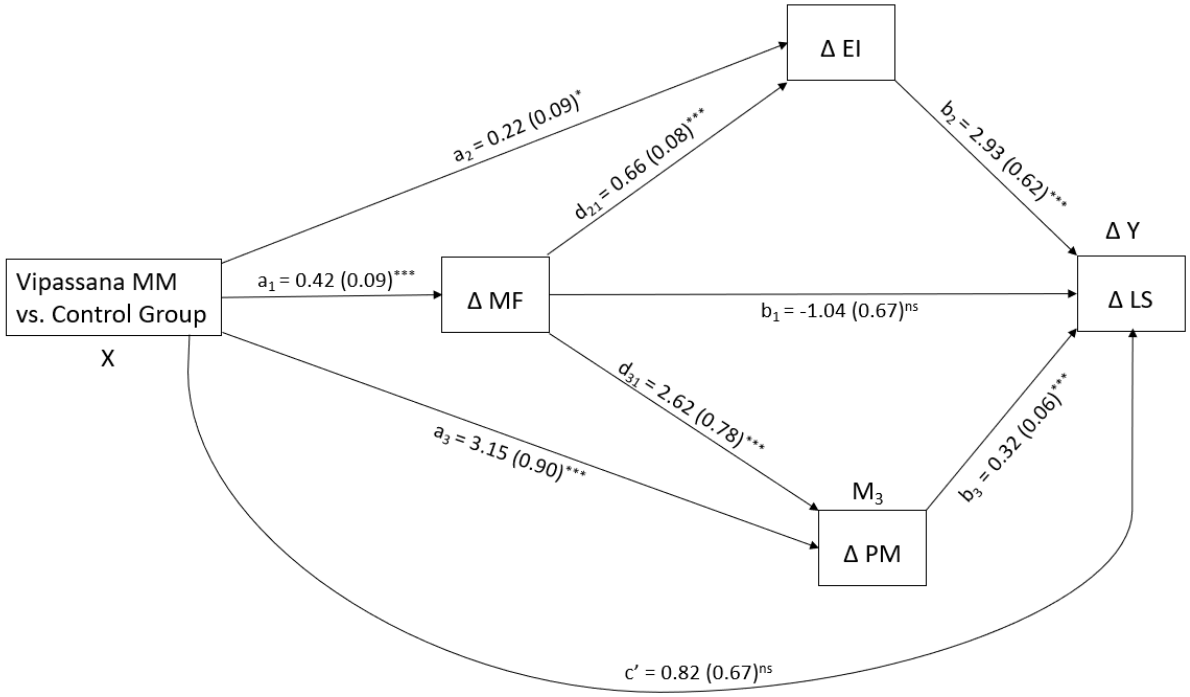

Figure 7.7 (Pre-Follow-up): *Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) of a Serial Multiple Mediator Model Predicting Increase in Life Satisfaction (ΔLS). S.E. Displayed in Parenthesis*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

7.4 Serial Mediation to Predict Enhanced Psychological Well-Being

7.4.1 Predicting enhanced PWB (Pre-Post):

Direct effects are displayed in Figure 7.8 and indirect effects are reported in Table 7.8 respectively. As seen, there was evidence of an indirect effect of Vipassana MM on increase in PWB via increase in PM, increase in HOP and increase in GRA (a_ib_i, bootstrap 95% CIs not containing zero, P_M) viz. via increase in PM (1.07, CI [0.33, 1.94], 0.21), via increase in HOP (0.69, CI [0.15, 1.41], 0.14), and via increase in GRA (0.68, CI [0.10, 1.44], 0.14).

Table 7.8*: Indirect Effects of Vipassana MM on PWB (Pre-Post)*

		Model 4: ΔY = ΔFLO¶				
Model Pathway	**Coeff.†**	**Effect‡**	**S.E.**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**	**P_M§**
1: X -> ΔMF -> ΔY	a_1b_1	0.67	0.43	-0.02	1.64	
2: X -> ΔPM -> ΔY	a_2b_2	1.07	0.42	0.33	1.94	0.21
3: X -> ΔHOP -> ΔY	a_3b_3	0.69	0.33	0.15	1.41	0.14
4: X -> ΔGRA -> ΔY	a_4b_4	0.68	0.35	0.10	1.44	0.14
5: X -> ΔMF -> ΔPM -> ΔY	$a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.31	0.18	0.04	0.75	0.06
6: X -> ΔMF -> ΔHOP -> ΔY	$a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.21	0.13	0.03	0.54	0.04
7: X -> ΔMF -> ΔGRA -> ΔY	$a_1d_{41}b_4$	0.31	0.18	0.06	0.74	0.06
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 3)	a_2b_2 - a_3b_3	0.38	0.53	-0.70	1.38	
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 4)	a_2b_2 - a_4b_4	0.39	0.46	-0.51	1.30	
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 5)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.76	0.41	0.04	1.63	
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 6)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.86	0.44	0.03	1.76	
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 7)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	0.76	0.45	-0.08	1.69	
Contrast (Ind 3 – Ind 4)	a_3b_3 - a_4b_4	0.002	0.49	-0.96	0.98	
Contrast (Ind 3 – Ind 5)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.37	0.38	-0.34	1.17	
Contrast (Ind 3 – Ind 6)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.47	0.30	-0.03	1.13	
Contrast (Ind 3 – Ind 7)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	0.38	0.40	-0.36	1.22	
Contrast (Ind 4 – Ind 5)	a_4b_4 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.37	0.39	-0.36	1.21	
Contrast (Ind 4 – Ind 6)	a_4b_4 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.47	0.39	-0.25	1.29	
Contrast (Ind 4 – Ind 7)	a_4b_4 - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	0.38	0.35	-0.29	1.11	
Contrast (Ind 5 – Ind 6)	$a_1d_{21}b_2$ - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.10	0.19	-0.25	0.51	
Contrast (Ind 5 – Ind 7)	$a_1d_{21}b_2$ - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	0.01	0.19	-0.40	0.39	
Contrast (Ind 6 – Ind 7)	$a_1d_{31}b_3$ - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	-0.09	0.20	-0.52	0.27	

Full model: F (7, 146) = 21.44, p < .001, R^2 = 0.51, MSE = 20.92.

Abbreviations: X: Vipassana MM vs Control group; Δ: Change in scores (T1-T0); Y: Psychological Well-being; S.E.: Bootstrap 95% Standard Error; LLCI & ULCI: Bootstrap 95% Confidence Intervals; Ind: Indirect effect

† Coeff.: Path coefficients as shown in Figure 6.3. ‡ Unstandardized coefficient

§ P_M: Ratio of indirect effect to total effect

There was evidence for serial indirect effects of Vipassana MM (X) on enhanced dimensions of PWB first via increase in mindfulness (ΔMF) and then increase in PM or increase in HOP or increase in GRA ($a_1d_{i1}b_i$, bootstrap 95% CIs not containing zero, P_M) viz. X→ΔMF→ΔPM→ΔFLO (0.31, CI [0.04, 0.75], 0.06), X→ΔMF→ΔHOP→ΔFLO (0.21, CI [0.03, 0.54], 0.04), X→ΔMF→ΔGRA→ΔFLO ($a_1d_{21}b_2$ = 0.31, CI [0.06, 0.74], 0.06).

***Table 7.9**: Indirect Effects of Vipassana MM on PWB (Pre-Follow-up)*

		Model 4: ΔY = ΔFLO[¶]				
Model Pathway	**Coeff.[†]**	**Effect[‡]**	**S.E.**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**	**P_M[§]**
1: X -> ΔMF -> ΔY	a_1b_1	0.22	0.34	-0.45	0.93	
2: X -> ΔPM -> ΔY	a_2b_2	0.90	0.34	0.31	1.63	0.22
3: X -> ΔHOP -> ΔY	a_3b_3	0.58	0.33	0.09	1.36	0.14
4: X -> ΔGRA -> ΔY	a_4b_4	0.59	0.34	0.01	1.34	0.14
5: X -> ΔMF -> ΔPM -> ΔY	$a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.32	0.19	0.05	0.77	0.08
6: X -> ΔMF -> ΔHOP -> ΔY	$a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.25	0.13	0.04	0.55	0.06
7: X -> ΔMF -> ΔGRA -> ΔY	$a_1d_{41}b_4$	0.40	0.23	0.07	0.95	0.10
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 3)	a_2b_2 - a_3b_3	0.33	0.45	-0.63	1.17	
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 4)	a_2b_2 - a_4b_4	0.31	0.45	-0.60	1.17	
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 5)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.59	0.37	-0.11	1.35	
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 6)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.66	0.38	-0.05	1.46	
Contrast (Ind 2 – Ind 7)	a_2b_2 - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	0.51	0.44	-0.37	1.36	
Contrast (Ind 3 – Ind 4)	a_3b_3 - a_4b_4	-0.01	0.47	-0.93	0.93	
Contrast (Ind 3 – Ind 5)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.26	0.41	-0.48	1.15	
Contrast (Ind 3 – Ind 6)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.33	0.34	-0.21	1.14	
Contrast (Ind 3 – Ind 7)	a_3b_3 - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	0.18	0.43	-0.64	1.08	
Contrast (Ind 4 – Ind 5)	a_4b_4 - $a_1d_{21}b_2$	0.27	0.40	-0.49	1.11	
Contrast (Ind 4 – Ind 6)	a_4b_4 - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.34	0.37	-0.33	1.14	
Contrast (Ind 4 – Ind 7)	a_4b_4 - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	0.20	0.39	-0.61	0.98	
Contrast (Ind 5 – Ind 6)	$a_1d_{21}b_2$ - $a_1d_{31}b_3$	0.07	0.19	-0.26	0.50	
Contrast (Ind 5 – Ind 7)	$a_1d_{21}b_2$ - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	-0.08	0.22	-0.56	0.33	
Contrast (Ind 6 – Ind 7)	$a_1d_{31}b_3$ - $a_1d_{41}b_4$	-0.15	0.21	-0.66	0.21	

Full model: F (7, 146) = 21.36, p < .001, R^2 = 0.51, MSE = 18.58.

7.4.2 Predicting enhanced PWB (Pre-Follow-up):

Direct effects are displayed in Figure 7.9 and indirect effects are reported in Table 7.9 respectively. As seen, there was evidence of an indirect effect of Vipassana MM on increase in PWB via increase in PM, increase in HOP and increase in GRA (a_ib_i, bootstrap 95% CIs not containing zero, P_M) viz. via increase in PM (0.90, CI [0.31, 1.63], 0.22), via increase in HOP (0.58, CI [0.09, 1.36], 0.14), and via increase in GRA (0.59, CI [0.01, 1.34], 0.14).

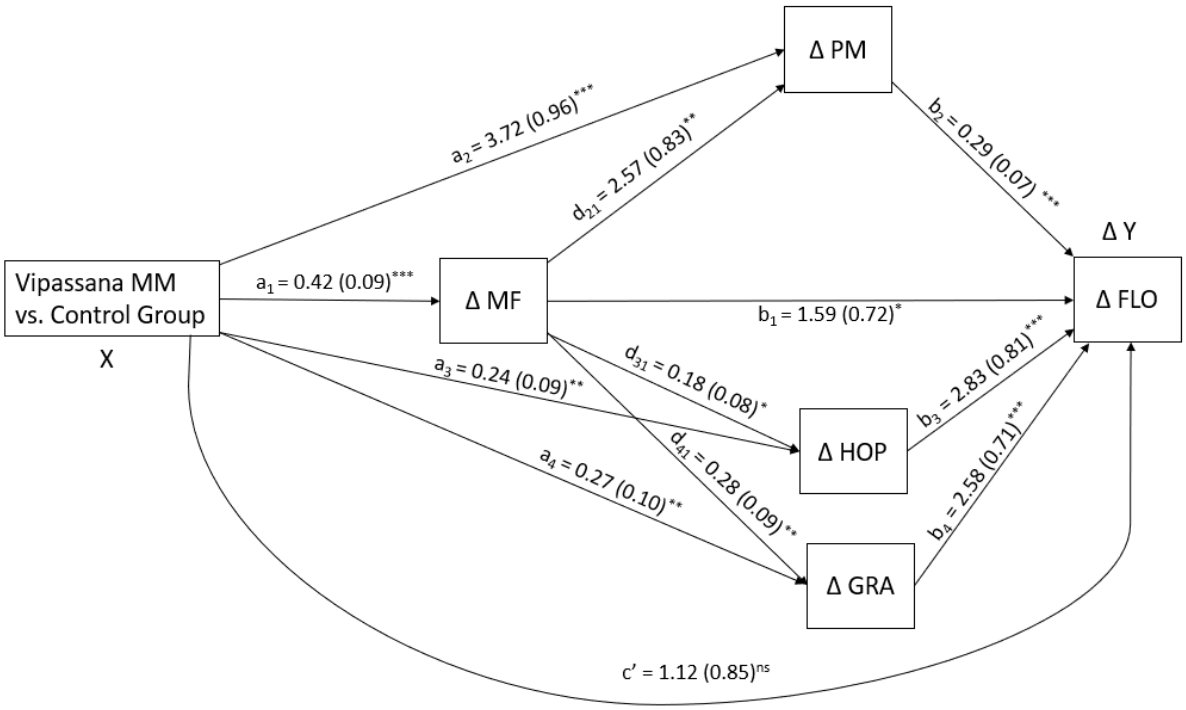

Figure 7.8 (Pre-Post): *Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) of a Serial Multiple Mediator Model Predicting Increase in Flourishing (ΔFLO). S.E. Displayed in Parenthesis;*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

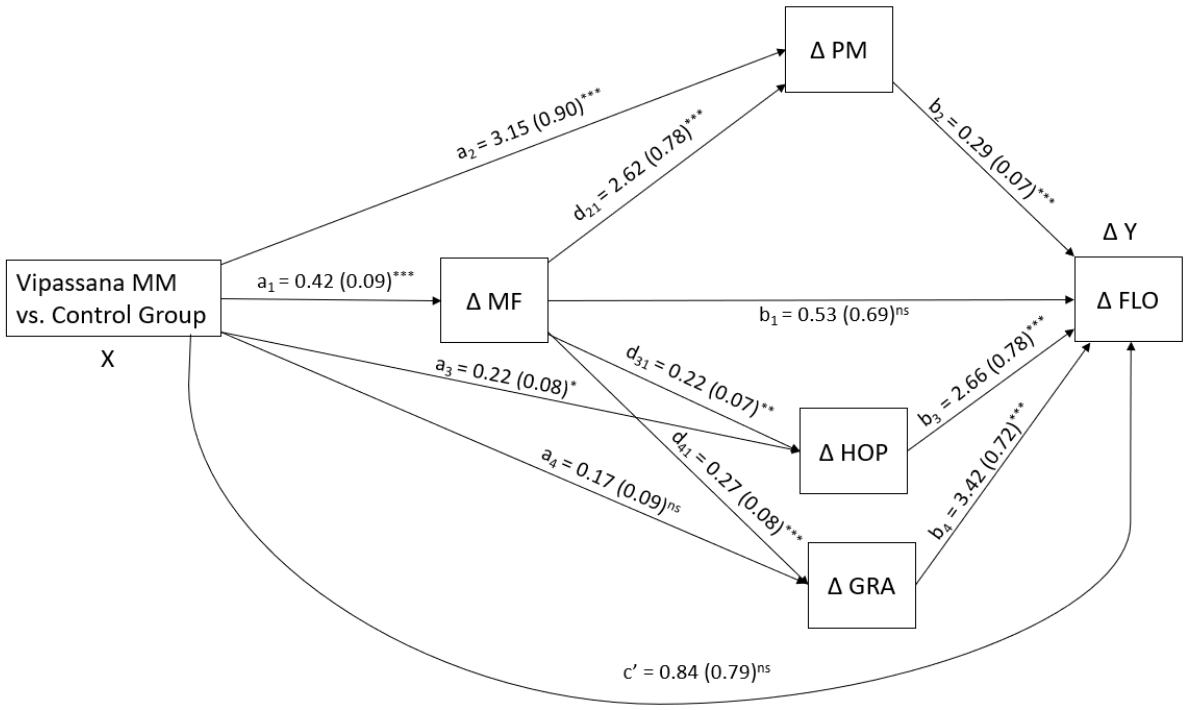

Figure 7.9 (Pre-Follow-up): *Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) of a Serial Multiple Mediator Model Predicting Increase in Flourishing (ΔFLO). S.E. Displayed in Parenthesis;*

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

There was evidence for serial indirect effects of Vipassana MM (X) on enhanced dimensions of PWB first via increase in mindfulness (ΔMF) and then increase in PM or increase in HOP or increase in GRA ($a_1d_{i1}b_i$, bootstrap 95% CIs not containing zero, P_M) viz. X→ΔMF→ΔPM→ΔFLO (0.32, CI [0.05, 0.77], 0.08), X→ΔMF→ΔHOP→ΔFLO (0.25, CI [0.04, 0.55], 0.06), X→ΔMF→ΔGRA→ΔFLO ($a_1d_{21}b_2$ = 0.40, CI [0.07, 0.95], 0.10).

Independent of the indirect effects, there was no evidence that Vipassana MM influenced change in FLO (c' = 1.12, p > 0.05 for Pre-Post; c' = 0.84, p > 0.05 for Pre-Follow-up) i.e. full mediation.

7.5 Mindfulness as a mediator

7.5.1 Multiple Mediation

There was no evidence of indirect effect of Vipassana MM (X) via increase in mindfulness on changes in PA or NA or LS or FLO (X→ΔMF→ΔY) in multiple mediator models, as bootstrap 95% CIs contained zero in case of all four outcomes; both for Pre-Post and Pre-Follow-up.

However, there was evidence of an indirect effect on conducting simple mediation analysis for pre-post and pre-follow-up viz. increase in mindfulness as a simple mediator of Vipassana's effect on change in PA or NA or LS or FLO.

8 QUALITATIVE STUDY – IPA

Jonathan Smith's (1996) paper introduced Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and highlighted how IPA may contribute to health psychology, post which it has been significantly leveraged in clinical settings. While holistically examining the contribution of IPA after 15 years, Smith (2011, p. 25) observed a critical gap in the IPA health psychology literature and urged future researchers to address the same through mixed methods studies:

"Finally, there is a noticeable gap in the IPA health psychology literature at present. One of the most important and dynamic areas of research in health psychology is in preventative health behaviour and health promotion. And yet in this review there was little IPA work in this area. IPA has much to contribute to the understanding of, for example, attitude behaviour relationships or of triggers and obstacles to beneficial health behavioural changes and I hope qualitative and quantitative researchers can be encouraged to work together to include IPA in more research in this key area….One way this can be facilitated is by mixed-methods studies which, again, IPA lends itself well to and which can take a number of different forms. It is important in such cases that the contribution of the qualitative arm of the research is given due weight."

This mixed methods (QUAN + QUAL) study aims to address the gap. Right volition, earnest effort and expertise of the members of the TAC (in psychology, research methodology and qualitative research) have enabled our team to do justice to both the paradigms.

8.1 IPA's Theoretical Underpinnings

Phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography are the three major theoretical underpinnings of IPA.

8.1.1 Phenomenology

Refer section 5.2.2 for details.

8.1.2 Hermeneutics

In IPA the phenomenologist engages in the process of double hermeneutics, with the researcher trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of his/ her experience (Smith, 2011).

8.1.3 Idiography

Idiography is concerned with the particular. IPA is idiographic in its commitment i.e., (a) depth of analysis for each case and (b) examining how a phenomenon is understood from the perspective of particular participants located in a specific context. Thus, IPA researcher finds a fairly homogeneous sample for whom the research question is pertinent and meaningful (Smith et al., 2009).

For Vipassana meditators, the practice of satipaṭṭhāna leads them to realize their essentially ephemeral nature and understand 'no-self' (ultimate truth) at the experiential level (Goenka & Hart, 2000; Hart, 2011). The practice of 'satipaṭṭhāna' requires deep immersion and sustained regular practice of Vipassana with multiple courses over time.

Thus, for the homogenous sample (as detailed below), IPA is most suited to address RQ3. This is in line with Smith's argument, "IPA is primarily concerned with experience which is of some existential import to the participant." (Smith, 2011, p. 14).

8.2 Sampling Plan

- Sample size – 4 to 10 as recommended by Smith (2011)
- Sampling method: Purposive criterion-based sampling.
- Using semi-structured interview
- A fairly homogeneous sample for whom (a) RQ3 is meaningful, (b) idiographic commitment to understand the perspective of particular participants in a particular context (long-term Vipassana meditators who are seasoned professionals and holding a position of responsibility and influence)

Accordingly, the team took cognizance of the following to finalize the selection criteria:

- Earlier research (Ekici et al., 2020) that leveraged IPA to study the lived experiences of long-term Vipassana Mahasi meditators
- Research that highlights how regular and sustained practice of meditation over time enables the effects to deepen. Long-term group, mainly Vipassana meditators, had lifetime hours that range from 1000 to over 10,000 hours (Goleman & Davidson, 2017).
- S N Goenka vividly shows the path, "*Daily meditation of two hours and yearly retreats of ten days are only the minimum necessary to maintain the practice*" (Goenka & Hart, 2000, p. 85-86). Thus, an individual who sustains such practice is likely to have 4000+ lifetime hours of meditation over 5 years.
- Emerging themes from the pilot (with 3 participants) relating to 'self' or 'identity' (like 'ego dilution', 'detachment to own views', 'self-as-phenomenon', 'selfless service') coupled with theoretical impetus from functional senses of self (refer section 3.1.1) and earlier work on identity change in organizational settings and the positive influence on workplace outcomes as a leader (refer section 3.1.3) highlighted the need to examine the influence of sustained practice of mindfulness on identity and sense of well-being amongst seasoned professionals (holding position of responsibility/ influence).
- The pilot study also highlighted [a] the need for the researcher and the co-researchers (participants) to have proficiency in a shared (common) language to facilitate thick description leading to thick interpretation and in turn thick meaning (Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007).

8.3 Selection Criteria

In view of the above, the selection criteria were as under:

- Sustained Vipassana Experience -> 4000+ lifetime hrs., regular practice over 5 years with multiple long-duration (10 days or longer) courses.
- Presently working and holding a position of responsibility and influence

- Professional Experience -> Min 15 years with last 3 years in the same profession
- Education – Graduation and above
- Language – Proficient in English or Hindi

To cater to these unique and stringent criteria alongside the need to foster trust, participants were contacted with the help of a trusted senior assistant teacher at Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) or snow-balling (referral by participants). Neither the trusted senior nor any participant had any previous personal or professional relationship with the researcher.

Additionally, the following aspects were looked into:

- Participant is comfortable in sharing their experience in a one-to-one virtual setting
- Willing to have the interaction digitally recorded
- In light of the sensitive and significant positions of responsibility (as detailed above) held by the participants and the openness with which they shared their profound personal/ professional experiences, the demographic details and analysis have been presented such that anyone's name or identity does not get revealed
- No incentive or any form of reward was offered to any participant

8.4 Data Collection

12 participants were interviewed using the Zoom platform. Only one participant was interviewed using 'Webex' platform.

The demographic details are given below:

Pseudo Name	**Gen**	**Age (yrs)**	**Interview Duration (min)**	**Asst. Teacher**	**Yrs. since first course**	**Line of Sight**	**Long course (30/45 days)**	**Lifetime hours#**
Ajay	M	55 to 59	89	Y	>20	10 to 50	Y	> 18k
Balan	M	45 to 49	81	Y	>20	1 to 10	Y	> 18k
Diya	F	45 to 49	104	N	>20	> 100		4.5k to 9k
Girish	M	45 to 49	95	N	10 to 20	> 100		9k to 18k
Harsh	M	45 to 49	62	N	10 to 20	> 100		9k to 18k
Isha	F	45 to 49	61	N	6 to 10	10 to 50		4.5k to 9k
Jai	M	55 to 59	75	N	>20	10 to 50	Y	> 18k
Mohit	M	50 to 54	66	N	10 to 20	> 100	Y	9k to 18k
Nilesh	M	50 to 54	75	N	6 to 10	> 100		4.5k to 9k
Rahul^	M	50 to 54	86	Y	>20	1 to 10	Y	> 18k
Urmi	F	45 to 49	75 + 65*	N	10 to 20	> 100	Y	9k to 18k
Yami	F	50 to 54	77	Y	>20	1 to 10	Y	> 18k
						Average lifetime hours		15k

* Subsequent to the first interview, Urmi had attended her first '45 days' long-duration course during the pandemic, and on her own contacted the researcher post completion of the course and shared, "This 45-days course has completely changed my understanding about self and life." Hence, she was interviewed for the second time, to unravel the wisdom cultivated and understand the shift in her lifeworld by examining how she made sense of this transforming lived experience (Smith et al., 2009).

Education: Apart from the 3 bureaucrats (IAS/ IFS/ IRS), amongst the other 9 participants – one had completed Ph.D., 7 had completed post-graduation, while one had completed graduation.

8.5 Analysis

In case of IPA, there is no clear right or wrong way or a linear sequential prescribed process for carrying out analysis. Instead, analysis follows an iterative and inductive cycle. It proceeds by drawing upon the following repertoire of strategies/ processes: (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al., 2009)

- Developing intimacy with the data through **immersion** (reading and re-reading; empathetic listening)
- **Line-by-line analysis** – descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments
- The identification of the **emergent patterns (i.e., themes)** emphasizing both convergence and divergence
- **Deeper levels of interpretation** - The development of a 'dialogue' between the researcher, coded data, and psychological knowledge, about what it might mean for participants in the context
- **Gestalt** – Development of structure/ frame - connections across emergent themes
- **Traceability** (organizing material to trace through the process) with **credibility**
- **Collaboration** – coherence and plausibility of the interpretation
- **Super-ordinate theme-wise (SO)** development of narrative (thick description -> thick interpretation) (Ponterotto, 2006)
- **Bracketing** and **Reflexivity**

ATLAS.ti, a Qualitative Data Analysis & Research Software was used with a view to (a) organize and analyse the transcripts viz. for line-by-line analysis, thematizing: labeling emergent patterns using the feature 'codes' in ATLAS.ti, (b) facilitate searching, linking and developing a frame by being able to download the output in MS excel format, (c) enable traceability.

Thus, the analysis was conducted by the researcher keeping in mind the research objectives by following the afore-mentioned repertoire of strategies/ processes; while ATLAS.ti and MS

Excel were used as tools to only facilitate such analysis. Examples with screenshots have been reproduced below for clarity:

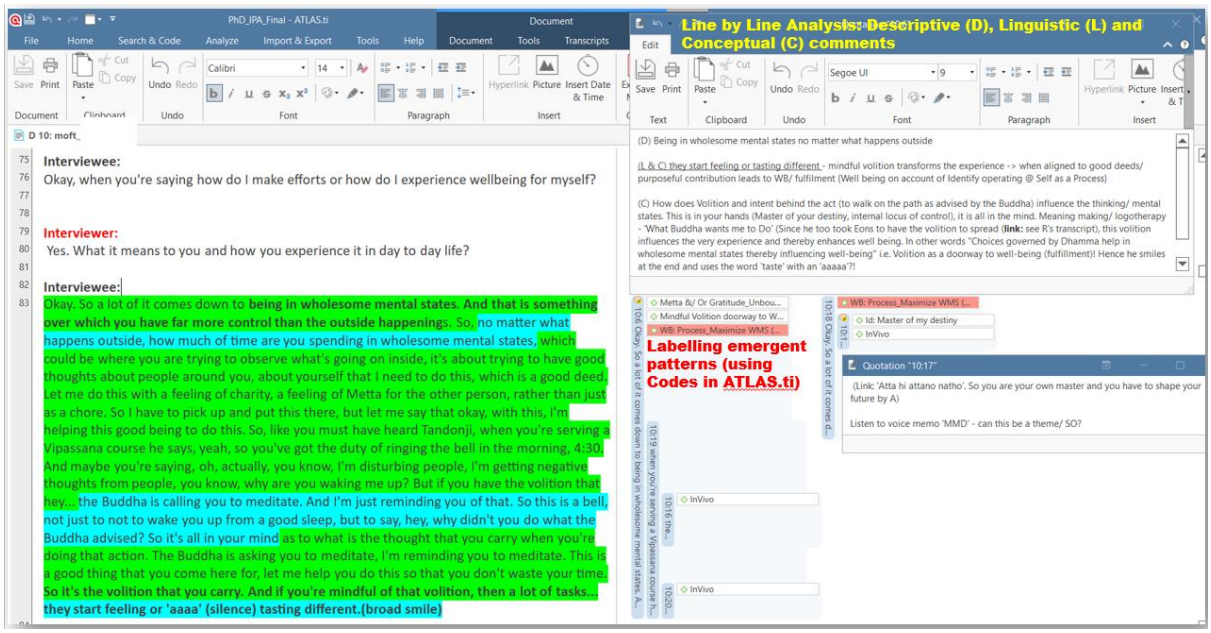
Line by Line Analysis: Descriptive (D), Linguistic (L) and Conceptual (C) comments
Interviewee:
Okay, when you're saying how do I make efforts or how do I experience wellbeing for myself?
Interviewer:
Yes. What it means to you and how you experience it in day to day life?
Interviewee:
Okay. So a lot of it comes down to being in wholesome mental states. And that is something over which you have far more control than the outside happenings. So, no matter what happens outside, how much of time are you spending in wholesome mental states, which could be where you are trying to observe what's going on inside, it's about trying to have good thoughts about people around you, about yourself that I need to do this, which is a good deed. Let me do this with a feeling of charity, a feeling of Metta for the other person, rather than just as a chore. So I have to pick up and put this there, but let me say that okay, with this, I'm helping this good being to do this. So, like you must have heard Tandonji, when you're serving a Vipassana course he says, yeah, so you've got the duty of ringing the bell in the morning, 4:30. And maybe you're saying, oh, actually, you know, I'm disturbing people, I'm getting negative thoughts from people, you know, why are you waking me up? But if you have the volition that hey... the Buddha is calling you to meditate. And I'm just reminding you of that. So this is a bell, not just to not to wake you up from a good sleep, but to say, hey, why didn't you do what the Buddha advised? So it's all in your mind as to what is the thought that you carry when you're doing that action. The Buddha is asking you to meditate, I'm reminding you to meditate. This is a good thing that you come here for, let me help you do this so that you don't waste your time. So it's the volition that you carry. And if you're mindful of that volition, then a lot of tasks... they start feeling or 'aaaa' (silence) tasting different.(broad smile)
Labelling emergent patterns (using Codes in ATLAS.ti)

***Figure 8.1**: Use of ATLAS.ti for line-by-line analysis and labelling emergent patterns*

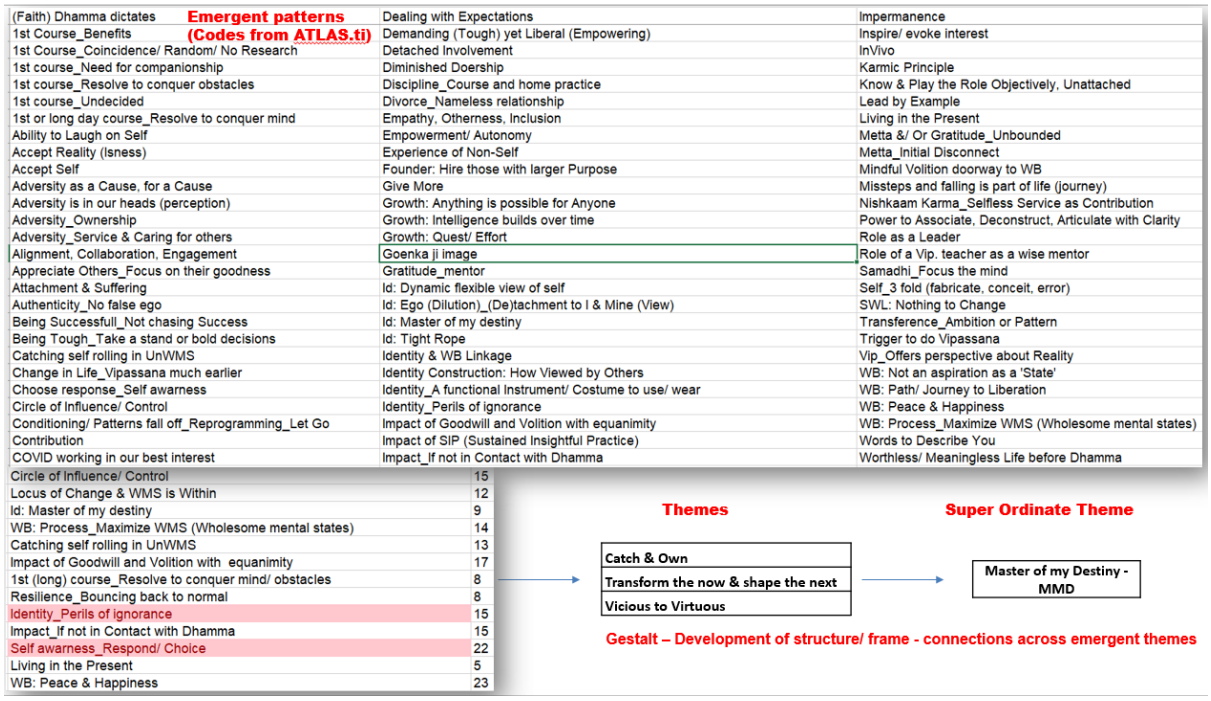
Emergent patterns (Codes from ATLAS.ti)
(Faith) Dhamma dictates
1st Course_Benefits
1st Course_Coincidence/ Random/ No Research
1st course_Need for companionship
1st course_Resolve to conquer obstacles
1st course_Undecided
1st or long day course_Resolve to conquer mind
Ability to Laugh on Self
Accept Reality (Isness)
Accept Self
Adversity as a Cause, for a Cause
Adversity is in our heads (perception)
Adversity_Ownership
Adversity_Service & Caring for others
Alignment, Collaboration, Engagement
Appreciate Others_Focus on their goodness
Attachment & Suffering
Authenticity_No false ego
Being Successfull_Not chasing Success
Being Tough_Take a stand or bold decisions
Catching self rolling in UnWMS
Change in Life_Vipassana much earlier
Choose response_Self awarness
Circle of Influence/ Control
Conditioning/ Patterns fall off_Reprogramming_Let Go
Contribution
COVID working in our best interest
Dealing with Expectations
Demanding (Tough) yet Liberal (Empowering)
Detached Involvement
Diminished Doership
Discipline_Course and home practice
Divorce_Nameless relationship
Empathy, Otherness, Inclusion
Empowerment/ Autonomy
Experience of Non-Self
Founder: Hire those with larger Purpose
Give More
Growth: Anything is possible for Anyone
Growth: Intelligence builds over time
Growth: Quest/ Effort
Goenka ji image
Gratitude_mentor
Id: Dynamic flexible view of self
Id: Ego (Dilution)_(De)tachment to I & Mine (View)
Id: Master of my destiny
Id: Tight Rope
Identity & WB Linkage
Identity Construction: How Viewed by Others
Identity_A functional Instrument/ Costume to use/ wear
Identity_Perils of ignorance
Impact of Goodwill and Volition with equanimity
Impact of SIP (Sustained Insightful Practice)
Impact_If not in Contact with Dhamma
Impermanence
Inspire/ evoke interest
InVivo
Karmic Principle
Know & Play the Role Objectively, Unattached
Lead by Example
Living in the Present
Metta &/ Or Gratitude_Unbounded
Metta_Initial Disconnect
Mindful Volition doorway to WB
Missteps and falling is part of life (journey)
Nishkaam Karma_Selfless Service as Contribution
Power to Associate, Deconstruct, Articulate with Clarity
Role as a Leader
Role of a Vip. teacher as a wise mentor
Samadhi_Focus the mind
Self_3 fold (fabricate, conceit, error)
SWL: Nothing to Change
Transference_Ambition or Pattern
Trigger to do Vipassana
Vip_Offers perspective about Reality
WB: Not an aspiration as a 'State'
WB: Path/ Journey to Liberation
WB: Peace & Happiness
WB: Process_Maximize WMS (Wholesome mental states)
Words to Describe You
Worthless/ Meaningless Life before Dhamma
Circle of Influence/ Control 15
Locus of Change & WMS is Within 12
Id: Master of my destiny 9
WB: Process_Maximize WMS (Wholesome mental states) 14
Catching self rolling in UnWMS 13
Impact of Goodwill and Volition with equanimity 17
1st (long) course_Resolve to conquer mind/ obstacles 8
Resilience_Bouncing back to normal 8
Identity_Perils of ignorance 15
Impact_If not in Contact with Dhamma 15
Self awarness_Respond/ Choice 22
Living in the Present 5
WB: Peace & Happiness 23
Themes
Super Ordinate Theme
Catch & Own
Transform the now & shape the next
Vicious to Virtuous
Master of my Destiny - MMD
Gestalt – Development of structure/ frame - connections across emergent themes

***Figure 8.2:** Use of ATLAS.ti and MS Excel to facilitate the 'search for connections'*

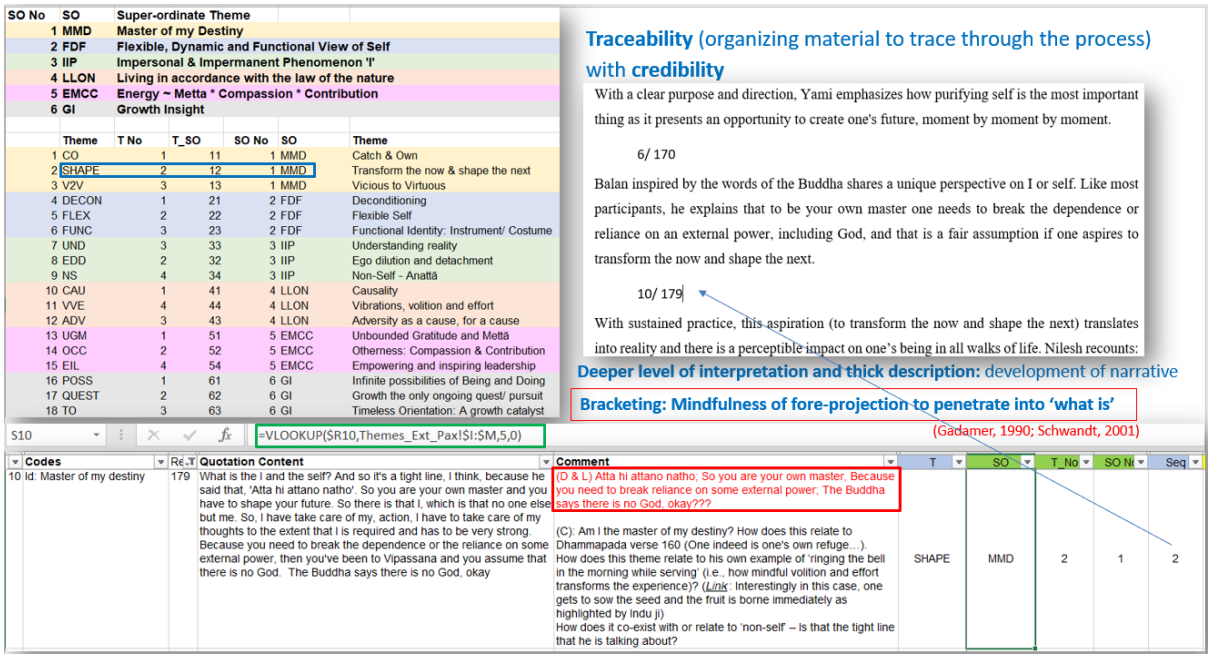
Traceability (organizing material to trace through the process) with credibility
With a clear purpose and direction, Yami emphasizes how purifying self is the most important thing as it presents an opportunity to create one's future, moment by moment by moment.
6/ 170
Balan inspired by the words of the Buddha shares a unique perspective on I or self. Like most participants, he explains that to be your own master one needs to break the dependence or reliance on an external power, including God, and that is a fair assumption if one aspires to transform the now and shape the next.
10/ 179
With sustained practice, this aspiration (to transform the now and shape the next) translates into reality and there is a perceptible impact on one's being in all walks of life. Nilesh recounts:
Deeper level of interpretation and thick description: development of narrative
Bracketing: Mindfulness of fore-projection to penetrate into 'what is'
(Gadamer, 1990; Schwandt, 2001)
=VLOOKUP($R10,Themes_Ext_Pax!$I:$M,5,0)
(D & L) Atta hi attano natho; So you are your own master, Because you need to break reliance on some external power; The Buddha says there is no God, okay???
(C): Am I the master of my destiny? How does this relate to Dhammapada verse 160 (One indeed is one's own refuge…). How does this theme relate to his own example of 'ringing the bell in the morning while serving' (i.e., how mindful volition and effort transforms the experience)? (Link: Interestingly in this case, one gets to sow the seed and the fruit is borne immediately as highlighted by Indu ji)
How does it co-exist with or relate to 'non-self' – Is that the tight line that he is talking about?

***Figure 8.3**: Use of tools to enable traceability and facilitate deeper level of interpretation*

8.5.1 Bracketing and Reflexivity

Gadamer illuminates the relationship between the fore-projection and the new object as also the complex interplay between the interpreter and the interpreted, "A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text… Working out this fore-projection which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there... The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings (Gadamer, 2004, p.269, 271, 272)

Thus, bracketing i.e., setting aside assumptions and suspending judgments to focus on and investigate the essential nature of experience or phenomenology (Schwandt, 2001) has played a very crucial role in this IPA study. Experientially (for the researcher) bracketing is mindfulness of fore-projections and fore-meanings to penetrate into 'what is'

An example of bracketing during the line-by-line analysis for the following extract:

> What is the I and the self? And so it's a tight line, I think, because he said that, 'Atta hi attano natho'. So you are your own master and you have to shape your future. So there is that I, which is that no one else but me. So, I have to take care of my, action, I have to take care of my thoughts to the extent that I is required and has to be very strong. Because you need to break the dependence or the reliance on some external power, then you've been to Vipassana and you assume that there is no God. The Buddha says there is no God, okay. [Balan].

Initial *Linguistic* & Descriptive comments: *Atta hi attano natho; So you are your own master,* ***Because*** you need to break reliance on some external power; The Buddha says there is no God, ***okay*****???**

As the researcher, I immediately caught myself and reflected on my thoughts/ feelings that made me to add '???' towards the end. I was also present to something that got triggered within; when I chose to make the words 'because' and 'okay' as bold. A part of me felt 'okay' and the other 'did not feel okay'. The divergence between various spiritual traditions and the corresponding dilemma within had raised its head. I noted my top of the mind thoughts/ feelings in a journal and created an audio log.

I also shared this particular extract and only my initial comments with another person who (a) is a researcher but has no idea about my project/ research objectives and (b) is a spiritual seeker but has never practiced Vipassana. This helped me to get a neutral perspective. This is a habit pattern that helped me throughout my journey. The person made three observations, (a) There is a need to study and understand the meaning of the words (in Pali) of the Buddha viz. 'Atta hi attano natho'… (b) There is a need to reflect on what is coming in the way of objectively engaging with the text.

After reading the words of the Buddha in Pali with an open mind and revisiting my self-reflections (journals/ logs), I was able to penetrate into 'what is' and hold a dialogue with the text by penning down some of the following conceptual comments/ questions!

Conceptual: Am I the master of my destiny?

Understand how this relates to Dhammapada verse 160 (One indeed is one's own refuge…).

How does this theme relate to his own example of 'ringing the bell in the morning while serving' (i.e., how mindful volition and effort transforms the experience)?

How does it co-exist with or relate to 'non-self' – Is that the tight line that he is talking about?

These comments/ questions allowed us to engage with different interpretative stances simultaneously. Thus, a combination of empathetic and questioning hermeneutics enabled us to come up with thick description leading to thick meaning. In fact, Master of My Destiny (MMD) emerged as the first super-ordinate theme, thanks to ongoing bracketing and reflexivity.

8.6 Super-ordinate themes

Each case was analysed in detail. As suggested by Smith and colleagues (Smith et al., 2009), in case of larger corpus/ samples (like in this study), the emergent patterns were identified at the 'case' level, but the 'search for connections' to identify the key 'themes/ super-ordinate themes' was done for all the 12 cases together, with a fine balance of convergence and divergence, not only presenting the shared themes but also showcasing the particular way in which these themes play out for individuals (Smith, 2011).

9 RESULTS (QUALITATIVE)

The analysis generated 18 themes across 6 super-ordinate themes (SOs) as shown below:

***Table 9.1**: Super-ordinate themes and themes*

Super-ordinate Theme	SO_No	Theme No	Theme
Master of my destiny (MMD)	1	1	Catch & Own
		2	Transform the now & shape the next
		3	Vicious to Virtuous
Flexible, dynamic and functional view of self (FDF)	2	4	Deconditioning
		5	Flexible Self
		6	Functional Identity: Instrument/ Costume
Impersonal and impermanent phenomenon 'I' (IIP)	3	7	Understanding reality
		8	Ego dilution and detachment
		9	Non-Self - Anattā
Living in accordance with the law of the nature (LLON)	4	10	Causality
		11	Vibrations, volition and effort
		12	Adversity as a cause, for a cause
e = mc2 (EMCC)	5	13	Unbounded Gratitude and Mettā
		14	Otherness: Compassion & Contribution
		15	Empowering and inspiring leadership
Growth InSight (GI)	6	16	Infinite possibilities of Being and Doing
		17	Growth the only ongoing quest/ pursuit
		18	Timeless Orientation: A growth catalyst

9.1 Overview of Super-Ordinate themes

9.1.1 Master of My Destiny (MMD):

“Atta hi attano natho'. So you are your own master”

“You are the creator of your future moment by moment”

This super-ordinate theme talks about how Vipassana mindfulness meditation enables participants to cultivate awareness and equanimity, which help them to take charge (moment-to-moment) and progressively purify and transform their minds' quality, thereby becoming the masters of their destiny and experiencing an array of benefits across different walks of life.

9.1.2 Flexible, Dynamic and Functional View of Self (FDF)

“The fun thing is when you see it, it drops away”

This super-ordinate theme deals with those times or experiences that the participants understand that they have been driven by patterns or habits from the past and how this realisation has transformed their view of the self, the world view and how this new view influences the way they engage with and contribute to the world.

9.1.3 Impersonal and Impermanent Phenomenon 'I' (IIP)

“Beyond my name really everything is negotiable.”

“You stay out of the way. The law of nature will work on purifying you”

This super-ordinate theme talks about how Vipassana helps in the unveiling of the truth – enabling the practitioner to come out of the ignorance about the reality of one’s true nature, about the phenomenon labelled ‘I’. The super-ordinate theme sheds light on how ‘I’ dissolves/ disintegrates and how experiential wisdom grows with practice; paving the way (out of suffering) to ever lasting peace and happiness.

9.1.4 Living in Accordance with the Law of the Nature (LLON)

“May the Force be with You!”

Over time as the participants observe the nature of reality within, they understand the ‘why, what and how’ of taking refuge in the truth. This super-ordinate theme talks about the clarity and unwavering faith that the participants develop over time, and their taking refuge in the triple gems (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha) as they walk on the noble eight-fold path. The super-ordinate theme brings to life the ‘life lived in accordance with the law of the nature’.

9.1.5 $e = mc^2$ (EMCC)

“Time for payback and gratitude. Strangers helped you on the path, so it is time for us to help others”

It is said that $e = mc^2$ is the world’s most famous and groundbreaking equation. While it applies to one and all, for the One who lives in accordance with the law of nature (Dhamma), it certainly applies in a different way! This super-ordinate theme brings to light how

Energy ~ Mettā * Compassion * Contribution

i.e., the time for payback and gratitude reflects in the energy with which One(ness) selflessly engages with or contributes to the world filled with mettā and compassion.

9.1.6 Growth InSight (GI)

“Bodhi is not anyone's monopoly. Everyone can cultivate it. It is not that it is given to you. It's in your hands.”

This super-ordinate theme talks about how understanding and applying Dhamma in life helps one to perpetually grow (irrespective of age or situation or past conditioning) in every walk of life, as one cultivates self-knowledge as a means to self-transformation. It sheds light on how growth is always in sight, as growth ensues (causally) with deeper insights (experiential wisdom) into the nature of reality through sustained intentional effort on the path of Dhamma.

9.2 Master Table of Themes:

As a part of the synopsis, the master table of themes provides particular examples taken from individuals.

Theme	Extract	Name
MMD		
Catch & Own	There is a space between action and reaction. But many times that space is just not there... I know while I'm yelling, I should not be yelling. Well, it still gets the better of you. I mean, this is a limit of how much seven habits (by Steven Covey) and other techniques can do for me... So that's when I thought that maybe I need to explore something else (Vipassana)	Girish
	Because it was always in hindsight, that I was in anger. But I felt so joyful that I caught myself angry in the moment and that anger vanished that time itself.	Yami
	I start feeling that stress building up into me and I focus on my breath and I tell myself that, nothing is permanent and this stress is going to go away. I observe my breath, I observe my sensations in my body and start coming out of stress.	Isha
Transform the now and shape the next	Atta hi attano natho'. So you are your own master and you have to shape your future.	Balan
	I was disturbed... for maybe 6 months, more than a year. So, that has gone down to 10 minutes. That is the biggest achievement of Vipassana… It has helped me, not the others. I have become a good human being	Nilesh
	I would never have experienced this kind of peace, never ever. I mean, forget about it, I would never imagine that one can experience such peace ever in life.	Jai
Vicious to Virtuous	So, whenever I am in a state where, I find myself in unwholesome emotions or thoughts, at a very, very high priority, I try to get some time and space to regain the balance of the mind and to regain myself with mettā and anicca because I know, I am shaping the future.	Yami
	Once your internal world changes, the external world does too.	Urmi
	So, well-being to me signifies that internally you are peaceful. That means you are not anxious. You are not worried. You are secured and you are happy, okay. Both at the physical level, body level, and at the mental level.	Ajay
FDF		
Deconditioning	It shook up my earlier conditionings of my beliefs and my view about the world and the self.	Ajay
	Earlier the state of mind was always to grab something more and more, and more and more of, for yourself... But now, anything that comes to you, and which doesn't come to you, accept it. That's what it is.	Jai

	I was prone to anger, anxiety, stress, criticism, I used to use a lot of foul language and all those things...But for Vipassana…. I would still be mired with some of the same complexes and same frictions that I had… I would not be in my work life, probably the stress level would have gotten the better of me	Harsh
Flexible Self	When you don't get promoted, you feel miserable. Right? The intensity of miserableness, I would say, has significantly come down when you don't see success.	Mohit
	I used to think and believe that as a women leader, I will have to be more assertive, I will have to be more aggressive and perhaps just be a little more male to be able to assert my authority and to be able to move and work. All that has completely changed with Vipassana.	Isha
	Liberation of being away from those continuous dissatisfaction and doubts - is this or am I good enough... that actually constitutes well-being. I just look around and I just feel that life is perfect, the way it is. So, that is well-being for me.	Urmi
Functional Identity: Instrument/ Costume	Functional as in, does it work to have this identity? If not, then let's not use it… Is I able to contribute or not?	Girish
	My father passed away and since then kind of I have taken his role	Rahul
	At this moment, I am acting as an … (representative) of India. However, that moment changes and I am acting as mother to my children and then that moment changes and then… has been very easy for me because it is all impermanent. So why carry an ego, that I am…..	Isha
IIP		
Understanding reality	Interviewer: As you see this image, sir, what comes to your mind? (image of S. N. Goenka was flashed onto the screen) I'm no more into images, I'm connected to Guruji and Dhamma... one moves from from gross to subtle. So photographs are gross level. So, on a subtle level, if we follow what Guruji taught us then that is the real respect for the teacher	Ajay
	I am not saying we are not affected. But the intensity of you getting affected, like this back pain, that I have... You know you will come out of it. It is gross and anicca. You know, two days from now you will be better, right? That is not a self-talk or a positive talk. Your anicca knowledge helps you to realize, yes, it will change. So, in all phases of life, you can use anicca and get confidence that you will come out of it.	Mohit
	… If there is sometimes something that is bothering me a lot, that observer in me also realizes that okay this is just another pattern playing itself out. And it is anicca. So, is it worth engaging? That is where I would say... That experience of a pattern and the patterns falling away, the habits falling away, I would say that has been the greatest learning	Urmi
	how quickly the realization comes in, well that you are getting into a conflict situation... I am a Vipassana meditator and the opposite person is not a meditator. So, I feel the onus is on me to salvage the situation, all the more so, rather than on the other person who does not understand all these things or does not see reality.	Jai

Ego dilution and detachment	One cannot put it into words. But when a difficult situation arises, and your ego is hurt, that's when you realize, yes, this is my ego coming in my way. And you see yourself there? That this is what you have to demolish.	Jai
	Earlier, it was all, 'I', 'I', like Guruji used to say. I am still like that 'Mein ki Bakriya'. (laughs incessantly). But I am trying to change myself, I can say that.	Diya
	Well, I have come to conclude, I am not invincible. Like I said, I am a small speck in the scheme of things. This is the main reason for reduction in stress and anxiety and all those things… a very humbling realization.	Harsh
	Interviewer: Can you share a little bit about yourself before we start? Ahhhh Okk… any specific aspects you want me to share. (Aaaa…Pause)… Because beyond my name really everything is negotiable…(laughs)…	Girish
Non-Self - Anattā	Obviously when my father died and I saw his body, I could actually feel the body is different, my father was different. So, body is getting deconstructed. That is very obvious. But the mind, the mental processes; to identify and realize they are also impermanent, is the journey. I don't want to sound as if I know the answer, but I am glad that I know the path to the answer	Mohit
	One plays roles in sansaar with this very limited, superficial external reality. But from time to time, especially when one is meditative...one is with this reality… when you connect with this reality, you detach from the outside world, I said my house, my family, my possession, my thoughts, and all of those instantaneously disappeared, the moment you connect with this worldview. The sensations flowing in and out. And that's it.	Rahul
	Vipassana teaches you to see that you are changing every moment, every day, every year. So, that is very important in understanding that, there is no 'I', everything is anicca.	Nilesh
	So, it's a long journey, with more and more depth. You start by saying, "I want to remove my defilements". It's like I want to purify myself... Your only job is to be an observer, whatever is happening is without craving and aversion, and the law of nature will work on purifying you... So, once anicca gets established, then the dukhabodh also starts developing, then anatta also starts coming in… 'anatta', there is no 'I' or self… whatever thoughts arise, whatever perceptions arise, they are just momentary, so don't cling to them and let them pass. (anatta) has really shaped my life, it makes it so much easy... keep yourself metta filled, tune into the positive volitional energy of the universe and stay out of the way of the Universal Grand Plan	Yami
LLON		
Causality	But if something has been presented by Dhamma, there are some legacy things... For 17 years, I was having all my rewards and I become better in my business and if I have financial challenges... Dhamma decides my karmic obligations to be settled, as in my future is always bright. That confidence is because I'm striving to do the right things as per Dhamma, aligning to Dhamma.. That's why I sleep peacefully.	Ajay
	Suppose there is anger that has arisen in me and there is sensation in the body, now if I don't work on observing the sensations objectively and with anicca, then the situation around me will develop in such a manner that I will find myself acting out that	Yami

	anger. If you are able to observe the whole situation with equanimity, then by the time the situation touches you, it will be like a feather on your scalp. It will not get within you and there is not enough force for you to get angry.	
	With Vipassana, I got clarity. I started to understand what is good, what is not good... Now, I just think that whatever was in my hands, I have done that. Whatever you have to do you do that... The ego thing of 'my order, my order' types has gone. I have done my part. The day I have signed and dispatched it; it has gone away from you. Now it is of the world	Diya
Vibrations, volition and effort	I asked him (client) to reflect on and told him that I have goodwill for you, so I am telling you (the truth)… And it is the power of my truth, when we speak the truth, there is a specific vibration from it. And if you don't speak the truth then there will be no strength in those vibrations… So I could see that it paused him (client) and it made him reflect. And it's a very big project. And if we lose it, it's like a year gone before we get something like this. But it's important for me not to always play safe	Rahul
	When you're serving a Vipassana course and you've got the duty of ringing the bell in the morning, 4:00 am. And maybe you're saying, oh, actually, you know, I'm disturbing people, I'm getting negative thoughts from people... But if you have the volition that hey... the Buddha is calling you to meditate... So it's the volition that you carry. And if you're mindful of that volition, then a lot of tasks... they start feeling or 'aaaa' (silence) tasting different (broad smile).	Balan
	Like 'a competitive loss'… a loss to your competitor, particularly for an important client, it can be usually quiet upsetting... typically my reaction would be to swear at... But my first reaction, this time around, when this big loss happened right after my first course was, I thought, ok. I think the competition must have done a really better job. I would never have said anything like that before in my life ever, ever. And now it was the real respect... we need to try harder next time. Because clearly, we did not have the winning formula	Harsh
Adversity as a cause, for a cause	I think I'm not very excited about the success and I'm not very afraid of failure... So I would say, adversity, failure has been there. But the perception of it has changed. Just like the perception of success has also changed, the perception of adversity and failure has also changed.	Urmi
	I look at adversity as a part of anicca, that it is in the cycle. There is you know, you never gonna have like this up and up straight line type of thing. So, you always should expect that there is some ups and downs going through and not take them personally.	Harsh
	I became very aware that I was very attached to my father. That was the first time, I came face to face with the reality that he is going to die now. So, there was a lot of grief that came in waves. So, I just stayed with my sensation and kept my thoughts away, kept it arising and passing and by the end of the course I was comfortable with his mortality	Yami
EMCC		
Unbounded Gratitude and Mettā	Interviewer: When you see this image (image of late Shri S N Goenka), what comes to your mind? Any thoughts, feelings? The thoughts that come to my mind is, he is the most revered Guruji for us. Because through him, we have got Dhamma… If there is any jewel in the multiple universe, then that is Dhamma... many times tears come to my eyes when I talk about him. For us the 'The Enlightened One' and the word of the Enlightened One comes through Guruji to us	Diya
	A lot of gratitude. Almost a sense of affection and also real inspiration from, how selflessly Goenkaji taught Vipassana to all of us	Harsh

	I felt very bitter towards the person who accused me of... So, yeah, it was major emotional and psychological upheavals that led me to Vipassana… And it is almost like a gift she has given me. She has actually introduced me to Vipassana which has now helped me becoming a stronger person. And even today I feel gratitude for her and goodwill towards her. I always say, may she be happy.	Isha
	Covid was very disruptive to everyone... something which Vipassana meditators have to give to the world, which is the amount of mettā that you can infuse. Because that's a unique contribution… so we added this to our practice, where you consciously, twice a day, to build mettā by saying people in my building, people, my locality, my city, and the world were afflicted by this or that, may they come out of it... So we are not doctors, but we can do this. We made sure that we did that as much as we could	Balan
Otherness: Compassion & Contribution	It's like suppose there was a very big disease that I am detected with and I found a magical herb to get myself recovered. Won't you want to share it with others. So, come on, you have to share it (Dhamma), right. That is one. And gratitude is towards the teacher, all those people who helped you on the path. So, strangers helped you, so it is time for us to help others	Yami
	Every day during COVID in mettā… You know, there is a teacher who taught me to give mettā like this. May all my past paramis; help reduce the impact of COVID; May all the good things I did for others; help reduce the impact of COVID. May the benefits of my courses, help others come out of COVID. May the blessings of my teacher, help me and others deal with COVID. These four phrases I used it every day	Mohit
	To my mind the focus was on him (General Manager under him) as the objective function and not as a constraint with my agenda. Earlier I would have seen him as a constraint, but not the focus… And now it's the exact opposite to me	Girish
	long way to go frankly speaking. I will not say, I have finished. Even if I come 100s or 1000s of times, again and again birth as a human being as a… (bureaucrat), even then I will not be able to finish the work. So, much to do for the people. Long way to go, I will say. Long way to go	Nilesh
	You should be on the giving side... so we are happy we give them (clients) more than the price that they pay, we prefer the equation to be that… We have always had a quality policy for the company that we offer to our clients... We suggest that you take one module and get started with it; at the price that we quote. And at the end of the module, we leave it to you, you can be raise anything from zero to 100% of that. And you have the full choice.	Balan
Empowering and inspiring leadership	There is business adversity... you come to a point of letting go of people. We have helped them get placed because you care for their career... Talk to our clients, talk to our associates saying this is a gem of a person, it's really my failure that I'm not able to utilize his potential. Because being the senior most, it's really up to us to get the business, to give him the right kind of experience so that he can grow. So I have not been able to do that. Unfortunately, I'll have to lose him. But you have this opportunity to gain.	Balan
	The deal went off, an important deal worth 12 crores… how to sustain. So I reached out to people whom I wouldn't have reached out to otherwise for help. That needs a lot of courage. And it makes you humble, humble enough, and more helpless. The moments of helplessness, I consider, arere very valuable for me to learn. Learn how to and then to be able to empathize with people… When I went through this thing, I realized, okay, because there are 33 families dependent on me, and you're standing in the society, you may be beyond it, but they're definitely affected by all these things.	Ajay

	Interviewer: Can you share an example when you inspired others to change or revisit their approach? No, I won't be able to. I don't know. I mean, maybe they were inspired, maybe they were not inspired. That I've done some things which are inspiring, I have no doubt. But whether they felt inspired and that has resulted in change, large scale change, permanent or temporary change, I have no idea	Rahul
	No matter whatever happens, if anything goes wrong also, they know, I am there to protect them. I always own the responsibility. It (mistake) has not been done by my executive engineer or my director. It has been done by me. If you want to punish anyone, punish me first. You remove me from this post and not my officers. That much faith my officers have and because of that they could deliver. Everybody used to come on all the holidays, Saturday, Sundays. Nobody used to stay at home. They loved their work so much	Nilesh
GI		
Infinite possibilities of Being and Doing	And your mental faculties are supposed to decline as you age, right? This seems to be like going in reverse for me. Second, I also feel that my reflexes and all of that are already better as I'm aging... I see a lot of improvement in the ability to do, not just in learning something, but in the basic ability to learn itself... I think what we lose over age is this ability to concentrate, this calmness because you're so disturbed all the time. And if you can address that, I think you can learn everything.	Urmi
	I have an access to a science or a process or a way of cultivating intelligence and wisdom at the most basic level... Vipassana breaks the barrier between the conscious and subconscious; where the knots get created for the intelligence and the comprehension... because now if I'm worried if I'm nervous, see if I have a scattered mind, intelligence and even application of intelligence would get impacted... So therefore the 'pativedanam' that is the penetrative wisdom, in the whole journey is about cultivating	Ajay
	One big shift for me is that every person has a seed in them. And there is nothing that they can't do. It may not be functional or productive for one to do something, given the larger purpose. Otherwise, this idea of talent to me is an anathema now... It's just a question of exposure and learning	Girish
	I have to reflect back a lot on how I was. Because I was a very angry person, I would say, very short-tempered person, very irritable, very sulking. It is hard to believe for me that I was such a person that time. It is not that I am 100% all the time calm. So when adversities come up, I do not lose my temper. Even if I lose it, I would come back to a state of normalcy very fast, within few minutes itself	Jai
	I would say one sentence which I always use to define Dhamma that as there is Newtons law of gravity and Einstein's law of relativity, there is buddha's law of Dhamma... Even as a doctor, the mearning of well-being has shifted from just Physical to Mangal... everyone's and my own happiness /bliss	Diya

Growth the only ongoing quest/ pursuit	Why not commit the mistakes early on, learn the lessons so that I can, you know, secure my future in a fail-safe manner. This magic wand of reversal if it is not eliminating my karma, it just postponing the same habit pattern that will cause me to commit the same mistake... And I think that with Vipassana, there's a good amount of introspection, a good amount of learning. This can fast-forward me on the right path	Rahul
	This is the third generation (in business), which means there is a certain intelligence you had even at the start of it, and still, it has traversed through such a large... the way I looked at people, managed people, what I valued, what I didn't value in people, I think all of that if I had to redo it, I would have to just disown the last many years of my life... (laughs incessantly).	Girish
	Personally pandemic has been amazing for me...was absolutely like a boon to me because I could do more Vipassana. I could go more deeper into my meditation. There was more time. I had less distractions and there was much more peace and quiet everywhere. For me it was a breeze.	Isha
	What happens when you do 2 hours? Your rest of the day's work gets reconfigured and you get 2 hours. Right… 15 years back, if somebody had told me 2 hours is possible, I would have said no. But today I feel, 2 hours is possible and again I use a phrase 'Virya Iddhipada'. It means if you put efforts, universe supports you. You put some more efforts; universe supports you more	Mohit
Timeless Orientation: A growth catalyst	And I think had I not got it, then like my so many births, this birth also would have gone waste. Now I have got a chance to see it with a different perspective, and maybe change my future with my own efforts…	Diya
	I definitely want them (my children) to do one Vipassana course. Because I feel it is a life skill. Vipassana is a life skill. It's an art of living. And I want to introduce them to this art of living before they are adults, before they are 18, and they take charge in their life	Isha
	There is no 'I', everything is anicca… In the mind it is 100% understood but at the experiential level, it is slowly getting understood and you feel that if the journey goes on the same way, then in this birth itself, we will get to understand many things.	Nilesh
	Time scale that you're talking about. So, if you consciously keep working on your, what is termed as intelligence, which could be how quickly you're able to grasp things in different situations, I think it builds up over time, it builds up over lifetimes	Balan
	I'm sure that, you know, my life would be spent only on making money and in pleasure but nothing more. And I'm so glad that I got Dhamma. *yadi guruvar milteh nahin parma desh swadesh toh dhan ke jhanjhaal mein jeevan jatha shesh...* If somebody were to come to me and inquire about well-being, I would, I would not think of well-being only in a timescale of human life... Even if at the cost of current well-being… So the concept of well-being starts evolving and the priorities shift	Rahul

9.3 Measuring recurrence of super-ordinate themes

Given the large corpus in this study, recurrence of super-ordinate themes was established in line with the recommendation by Smith and colleagues (Smith et al., 2009, p. 106-107), "for these larger studies, measuring recurrence across cases is important. The key decision here is how, for a particular study, the status of 'recurrent' is defined. So, for example, a decision may be made that for an emergent, or super-ordinate theme to be classified as recurrent it must be present in at least a third, or a half, or, most stringently, in all of the participant interviews. Counting like this can also be considered as one way to enhance the validity of the findings of a large corpus."

To enhance the validity of the findings, we used a stringent criterion such that for any super-ordinate theme (6 SOs) to be classified as recurrent it must be present in case of all the participants. However, each theme (18 nos.: 3 themes within each SO) may or may not be present in all the cases. Table 9.1 shows [a] the recurrence at the SO level (refer last row) and [b] the number of themes (out of 3 themes in each SO) present in each case (refer last column).

Table 9.2*: Recurrence of Super-ordinate themes*

	Super-Ordinate Theme						
Participant	**MMD**	**FDF**	**IIP**	**LLON**	**EMCC**	**GI**	**No. of themes present in each case**
Ajay	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
Balan	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
Diya	3	2	2	2	3	3	15
Girish	3	3	2	3	3	3	17
Harsh	3	3	2	3	3	2	16
Isha	3	3	2	2	3	2	15
Jai	3	3	2	3	3	3	17
Mohit	3	3	2	2	3	2	15
Nilesh	3	3	2	2	3	3	16
Rahul	3	3	3	2	3	3	17
Urmi	3	3	2	3	2	3	16
Yami	3	3	3	3	2	3	17
	36	*35*	*28*	*31*	*34*	*33*	
SO present in all the cases?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

A few key observations that enrich our understanding are as follows:

- Unlike other SOs, all 3 themes within MMD are present in all the 12 cases

- Amongst all the 18 themes, the theme 'Non-Self – Anattā' is present in 4 out of 12 cases. While all the participants shared intellectual understanding that there is no real 'I', experiential understanding was explicitly articulated by 4 participants, without asking any leading question. By this we do not mean to pass any judgment (that is neither our objective, nor do we have any authority or capacity to infer). This is a mere observation and primarily points towards the long journey for cultivation of this deepest wisdom through direct personal experience. As S N Goenka lucidly explains, "Having explored the mind and body to the deepest level, one sees that there is no immutable core, no essence that remains independent of the processes, nothing that is exempt from the law of impermanence" (Hart, 2011, p. 91). However, such experience shows up and is not something that one craves (needs to crave) for. As S N Goenka clarifies, "keep on observing the reality of this moment, and let enlightenment come. If it does not come, don't be upset. You just do your job and leave the result to Dhamma. If you work in this way, you are not attached to enlightenment and it will certainly come… Whatever comes will come by itself. Let is happen naturally" (Hart, 2011, p. 133). This is exactly what Urmi shares with ease and clarity,

  > Now the next step of how will this I change and will I get to a stage where even the observer will dissolve and all of that, who knows. I mean, I do think about it, honestly, but that's more intellectual rumination. At this point really there is no emotional involvement with it. There is nothing like, oh, why isn't it happening or when will it happen? All of that [Urmi]

- 17 to 18 (out of 18) themes show up in case of 4 participants (Ajay, Balan, Rahul, Urmi) who meet four criteria viz. lifetime hours > 18,000, have done long duration course(s), have been practicing since 20+ yrs and serve as Asst. teacher. Notably, as seen from Table 9.1, the theme 'Non-Self – Anattā' shows up only for these participants.

- 17 themes also show up in case of another participant (Jai) who met all the above criteria, except that he offers a different kind of service (not as an Asst. teacher) on the path of Dhamma.

- 17 to 18 themes show up in case of two participants (Girish and Rahul) who explicitly acknowledged the role of a mentor for deeper/ accelerated insights on the path of Dhamma.

  > And I think one is to have the technique. The other is to have access to a really experienced practitioner… who can help you interpret… deconstruct… or even point you in the direction. I think that was invaluable… whole journey for me got accelerated like I think, orders of magnitudes [Girish]

  > …deeper meaning of Dhamma, the correct understanding of Dhamma. I was very fortunate to have a teacher… he was also a mentor [Rahul]

9.4 Placing/ Embedding the Super-Ordinate themes

Post completion of the analysis and prior to drawing meta-inferences, the super-ordinate themes (SOs) were placed/ embedded in light of the teaching of the Buddha as quoted in the discourses during the 10-days Vipassana course, existing literature and relevant theories.

9.5 Assessing the quality of the IPA analysis

There are several authors who have generated guides/ shared guidelines for assessing the quality and validity of qualitative research (Elliott et al., 1999; Morrow, 2005; Yardley, 2000).

Before embarking on the analysis, we went through all these guidelines in detail, including the criteria developed by Smith that also draw on the earlier work (Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2011).

Table 9.3: Examining the quality of the IPA analysis

Author	Criteria/ Guide	Met	Remarks
(Smith, 2011)	Clearly subscribes to the theoretical principles of IPA: it is phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic	Y	Clearly subscribes as shown throughout
	Sufficiently transparent so reader can see what was done	Y	
	Coherent, plausible and interesting analysis.	Y	
	Sufficient sampling from corpus to show density of evidence for each super-ordinate theme (SO). For N>8: extracts from at least three participants for each SO *plus* measure of prevalence: from half the sample for each SO	Y	Refer section 9.8 for recurrence of SOs. Overall corpus has been drawn on proportionately.
(Morrow, 2005)	Social validity	Y	The topic of investigation has high social value with implications for individuals, organizations and society at large
	Subjectivity (bracketing for constructivist paradigm) and reflexivity (self-reflective journal)	Y	'Bracketing' and journaling (self-reflective) was used throughout.
	Adequacy of data	Y	Insights rich cases through purposeful sampling, striking balance between convergence and divergence and thick interpretation leading to thick meaning
	Adequacy of interpretation	Y	Developing deep intimacy with the data, using iterative process and balancing interpretation and quotations from the participants

10 DISCUSSION

This study provides novel evidence of the significant positive impact of Vipassana MM on well-being, trait EI, presence of meaning and mindfulness in healthy professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic. The interaction effects highlighted significant and sustained improvement vis-à-vis the control group. These findings become critical in light of the [a] recommendations by Holmes and colleagues (2020) to promote interventions that protect mental well-being and enhance resilience to counter the mounting risk of developing mental health disorders during pandemic, [b] proclamation by the WHO (2019) that mental illness accounted for an economic impact of US$ 1 trillion per year in lost productivity; which is bound to deepen and [c] findings by McKinsey (2021) that 37% of the employees are likely to avoid any treatment because of the stigma attached to mental illness.

Thus, Vipassana, a universal (non-sectarian) mindfulness meditation practice based on the teachings of the Buddha that is offered for free across the globe and targeted towards entire humankind, may play a crucial role at the level of individual, organization and society at large.

10.1 Interpreting the Effect Size

This study affords an opportunity to interpret the effect sizes (as reported in Tables 7.2 and 7.3) in light of the previous causal research on the beneficial effects wielded by different mindfulness approaches on varying measures, target groups, and contexts.

For instance, in a meta-analysis of RCTs employing MBIs (from short online programs to retreats with varying intensity/ duration), Chu and Mak (2020) reported an overall moderate effect size (Hedge's g=0.53, 95% CI [0.26, 0.80]) on meaning in life assessed using three different measures across varying samples (clinical, community). Meaning in life plays a critical role in coping with uncertainty, especially when faced with existential questioning in the face of life-threatening experiences that unfolded during the Covid-19 pandemic (Frankl, 2000; Korkmaz & Güloğlu, 2021). Mindfulness cultivates the ability to respond to the question "Who am I?" and “Who am I not?” and objectively see the nature of all internal and external phenomenon by flexibly engaging more with 'self-as-process' - attending to the experience of the present moment, and 'self-as-perspective' - seeing self as an observer of one’s experience (Atkins & Styles, 2015; S. L. Shapiro et al., 2006). Vipassana MM enables one to penetrate the selfless nature of all phenomena and cultivate *sampajaññ*a or clear comprehension (Bodhi, 2011; Ekici et al., 2020) through intentional effort, and this clarity, in turn, fosters meaning in life (Chu & Mak, 2020) and reappraisal and meaning making (Garland et al., 2015). Additionally, the intense practice, like in the case of a rigorous 10-days (100+ hrs.) Vipassana MM course in a conducive environment with noble silence, amplifies the effects vis-à-vis daily practice with a distinct neural profile (Wielgosz et al., 2016; Goleman & Davidson, 2017).

Thus, in general, we argue that the interwoven web of 3Is – Intention propelled by the intensity of the unique 10-days residential Vipassana MM course in the Impelling context (pandemic), may have contributed to relatively larger effect sizes in this study. This is in line with the previous research by Kelly and colleagues (2017), who assert that interventional complexity (i.e. intention and intensity) and contextual complexity (i.e. impelling context) may modify the effects of a complex intervention; which in turn may lead to wide prediction intervals (PI).

Case in point is the wide PI reported in the recent meta-analysis of RCTs on how mindfulness-based programmes improved well-being (effect size = 0.33; 95% CI [0.11 to 0.54]; 95%; PI [-0.29 to 0.94]) in non-clinical settings (Galante et al., 2021).

While we have attempted to place/ embed the findings from the experiment in light of the existing literature, the inadequacy of positivism in this study is discernible.

10.2 Decoding Underlying Mechanisms with meta-inferences

The objective of drawing meta-inferences is to holistically and effectively respond to the question, 'What do the results of the experiment imply and how does phenomenology illuminate our understanding?'

10.2.1 Bringing together the 'What' and the 'How'

Serial mediation analysis revealed the underlying mechanisms through which Vipassana MM exerts its positive effect on various dimensions of subjective well-being (affective and cognitive) and psychological well-being.

In general, the results of serial mediation were consistent with the previous findings that aided in developing the hypotheses. Increase in positive affect and decrease in negative affect (affective well-being) were mediated by increase in trait EI as well as serially mediated first via increase in mindfulness and then increase in trait EI. Increase in life satisfaction (cognitive well-being) was mediated by increase in trait EI and increase in PM as well as serially mediated first via increase in mindfulness and then increase in trait EI or PM. Increase in flourishing (PWB) was mediated by increase in PM, increase in Hope and increase in Gratitude as well as serially mediated first via increase in mindfulness and then increase in PM or Hope or Gratitude.

Specifically, there was evidence of a full mediation for PA, LS and FLO, while there was a partial mediation for NA; with a significant direct effect of Vipassana MM on decrease in NA (ratio of direct to total effect being 0.65 for Pre-Post and 0.50 for Pre-Follow-Up). While this ratio may not be comparable across samples, it may be inferred (in this study) that a sizeable proportion of the large effect size that Vipassana MM exerted on decrease in NA was not via the proposed mediators. This finding may unravel the unique effect of Vipassana MM on decrease in NA, while pointing towards the need for coexistence of contrasting research paradigms to fully understand the 'what' and 'how' of such an effect.

S N Goenka, who spread Vipassana across the globe, explained that only '*bhāvanā-mayā paññā*' - wisdom developed through direct personal experience, can totally purify one's mind (Hart, 2011). Phenomenology, anchored in the constructivist-interpretivism paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005), illuminates the essence of Vipassana MM to determine how practitioners derive meaning and make sense of their lived experiences (Smith, 2011; Sauer et al., 2012). Yami shared how there was a perceptible increase in her self-awareness post the very first course, so much so that she felt joyous when she caught herself in anger, which vanished the very moment she observed it with equanimity ("I remember, after returning from the (first) course… some external event happened and there was anger in me. I was, and the awareness happened then and there that I am in anger… I felt so joyful that I caught myself angry in the

moment and that anger vanished that time itself"). Thus, it is not about managing or coping or transforming the negative affect, but becoming free of it by simply observing it non-judgmentally. "You become free from the anger if you learn to observe it objectively" (Goenka in Hart, 2011, p. 38).

It is pertinent to point out how the interplay between the super-ordinate themes ''MMD', 'FDF' and 'IIP' support the theoretical thrust of relational frame theory (RFT) and functional senses of self. These SOs clearly highlight (a) how mindfulness transforms the practitioner's understanding and response to the question 'Who am I (not)?' and (b) how sustained practice of Vipassana MM empowers one to flexibly engage between the functional senses of self. Through deconditioning, the rigidity around 'self-as-story' dissolves (Urmi's self-doubts like 'Am I good enough? fell off), and one focuses more on 'self-as-process' by looking at the experience of arising and passing in the here-and-now (Isha's lucidness: "Any criticism - it is just a sound that has come to my ears and that is it. A bad sound has come to my ears and I am not going to process it…it's impermanent") as well as frequently seeing themselves as the observer of the experience viz. 'self-as-perspective' (Yami's understanding: "Your only job is to be an observer, whatever is happening is without craving and aversion, and the law of nature will work on purifying you"). Further 'MMD' highlights how one takes charge to kick-start the metamorphosis viz. from rolling in the vicious loop of unwholesome mental states (driven by old patterns and ill-understanding of self) to initiating a virtuous cycle of being in wholesome mental states; thereby maximizing well-being and experiencing real and lasting peace and happiness. Thus, the goal of Vipassana is not about maximizing 'PA' or minimizing 'NA' (as both are 'anicca'), instead it is about transforming the now and shaping the next by moving from 'unwholesome' to 'wholesome' mental states.

This meta-inference augments the findings of a recent IPA study on how meditators perceived Vipassana as a process for 'cleansing the mind' (as a master theme); whereby all maladaptive mental habits were eliminated with *sampajañña* viz. clear comprehension (Ekici et al., 2020). Thus, the meditator's intent and effort is to eradicate the unwholesome and awaken the wholesome (Bodhi, 2011). Such underlying processes, not captured by measures used in the serial mediation model, manifest in the form of a significant direct effect of Vipassana MM on substantial attenuation in NA. This showcases the power of 'complementarity' by integrating results from both paradigms into meta-inferences (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

10.2.2 Mindfulness as a Mediator

There was no evidence of a specific indirect effect of Vipassana MM (X) via increase in mindfulness (ΔMF) on changes in PA or NA or LS or FLO (X→ΔMF→ΔY) in multiple mediator models. This contrasts with the generalized findings that afford evidence for mindfulness as a mediator across diverse sample characteristics (clinical or non-clinical) and outcomes like stress, anxiety, mood states, etc. (Gu et al., 2015). However, Keng and his colleagues (2012) found no evidence for MF as a mediator of MBSR's effect in multiple mediation analysis. Interestingly, in this study, there was evidence of an indirect effect on conducting simple mediation analysis viz. increase in mindfulness as a mediator of Vipassana's effect on increase in PA or LS or FLO and decrease in NA. However, as reported, the specific indirect effect ceased to show up in multiple mediator models. Both the contrasting findings

may be correct, as Hayes (2022, p. 197) asserted that "the indirect effect in a model with a single mediator confounds influence through that sole mediator and other mediators it may be correlated with but that are excluded from the model." This coupled with a significant correlation between mindfulness and EI, found in this study ($r=0.696$, $p<0.001$) and previous research (Baer et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2007), may reconcile the discrepancy observed. This also calls for addressing another key dilemma.

10.2.3 Do Mindfulness Measures Relate to the Actual Practice?

An operational definition is imperative to develop valid scales, which in turn may be deployed to examine the underlying mechanisms through which the practices exert their effects (Baer et al., 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003). The lack of consensus on an operational definition of mindfulness coupled with the creation of multiple self-report scales in a bid to embed mindfulness into psychology (Rapgay & Bystrisky, 2009) suggests that mindfulness, as measured using the self-report scales, may not capture the essence of the actual practice of mindfulness meditation (Manuel et al., 2017), especially in case of Vipassana MM, as most scales (including FFMQ) were not designed on Buddhist theory (Van Dam et al., 2017). Thus, indirect effects via other mediators (beyond mindfulness), like trait EI and PM in this study, gain prominence in investigating the underlying mechanisms through which Vipassana MM exerts its effect.

It is pertinent to point that Frieburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI), grounded in Buddhist theory and developed with the help of experts (like Fred Von Allmen) in Buddhist psychology who taught Vipassana or insight meditation (Buchheld et al., 2001), may capture (relatively better) the essence of Vipassana MM adequately. However, being rooted in the teachings of the Buddha, FMI requires such knowledge and understanding from the participants being tested – (e.g., consider a sample item of FMI "I am able to smile when I notice how I sometimes make life difficult". As seen above (section 10.2.1), this ability to engage in 'self-as-perspective' ('notice how I…') and 'self-as-process' ('able to smile' in the here and now) facilitates 'cleansing the mind' with with *sampajañña*.

However, the participants with no experience (control group) or perhaps limited exposure (first time meditators - in light of the last SO 'Growth Insight') may not be in a position to (fully) comprehend and objectively report. Thus, neither FFMQ nor FMI (alone) are apt to fully examine the impact ('what' and 'how') of Vipassana MM as envisioned in this study. We argue that both the scales be deployed in future studies. This is in line a previous quasi-experimental study deploying two scales to measure mindfulness (Falkenström, 2010). This coupled with multiple measures of well-being (components of SWB and PWB) in a longitudinal design (pre, post, follow-up) will further bolster the understanding of 'what' and 'how' of impact through 'within method' triangulation (Denzin, 2009; Fusch et al., 2018).

This takes us to the next strength of this study - the power of 'between method' triangulation.

10.2.4 The curious case of *mettā* (loving-kindness)

S. N. Goenka explicates why mettā bhāvanā (loving-kindness meditation) is an integral part of Vipassana*, "*Previously one always tried to keep whatever was good for oneself and pass anything unwanted on to others. Now one understands that one's own happiness cannot be

achieved at the expense of others, that giving happiness to others brings happiness to oneself. Therefore, one seeks to share whatever good one has with others. Having emerged from suffering and experienced the peace of liberation, one realizes that this is the greatest good. Thus, one wishes that others may also experience this good, and find the way out of their suffering. This is the logical conclusion of Vipassana meditation: *mettā bhāvanā, the development of goodwill toward others"* (Hart, 2011, p. 120).

Even Bhikkhu Bodhi lucidly articulates, "The Mettā Sutta even refers to meditation on loving-kindness as a kind of mindfulness." (Bodhi, 2011, p.26), the object (brought before the mind) being the qualities of the Buddha.

The key questions are (a) how do we measure/ sense/ capture (the essence of) such qualities/ virtues/ *pāramīs viz. loving-kindness and (b) how did they show up in this study.* 'Between method' triangulation (Denzin, 2009) has helped us address them in a rather effective way.

Before interpreting the results from both paradigms and drawing meta-inferences, it is important to examine what 'love' and 'kindness' denote as character strengths (assessed in this study) and contrast them with the virtues that Vipassana cultivates/ aims to cultivate.

As character strengths, love denotes the extent to which one values close relationships with other people and contributes to the closest and warmest relationships with reciprocity - loving and accepting love, while kindness refers to being helpful, empathetic, nurturing and compassionate towards others – really being there for someone (not out of a sense of duty) without expecting anything in return (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Vipassana cultivates mettā (loving-kindness), karunā (compassion), muditā (altruistic joy) and upekkhā (equanimity). These are referred to as Brahmavihāra: sublime states in which the mind abodes (Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, 1999). While mettā and karunā relate to the afore-mentioned character strengths, they are 'Appamañña' (boundless and illimitable as they exist without limit for all living beings), which makes it extremely difficult to objectively measure. So, can one 10-days Vipassana course followed by practice for about 3 months (post, follow-up at T1 and T2) help one cultivates such boundless and illimitable virtues?

IPA strikingly demystifies. Being mettā filled is not like wearing a scent or making a decision that from today I will be filled with love and kindness. Hence, mettā is often referred to as 'mettā bhavana' as it cultivates over time. Balan shared his voyage of over 20 years – the significant shift *from not being able to connect with mettā during the first course* ("One part which I didn't connect during the first course at all was mettā, which I felt didn't fit into the technique") *to infusing the world with mettā as a unique contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic* ("Vipassana meditators have to give to the world, which is the amount of metta that you can infuse…that's a unique contribution… meditate with the Ratana Sutta twice a day…to build mettā people in my building, my locality, my city, and the world… may they come out of it… So, we are not doctors, but we can do this. We made sure that we did that as much as we could").

Being 'Appamañña' and the steady yet natural cultivation are completely in sync with the lucid and profound elucidation by Sharon Salzberg (2011, p. 177), "Loving-kindness is essentially a

form of inclusiveness of caring, rather than categorizing others… Any reduction in our tendency to fall into attachment, aversion or delusion helps refine and expand the force of loving-kindness… (this) diminishing and the increase in insight are both reasons mindfulness naturally leads us to greater loving-kindness."

This corroborates with our findings from the experiment. Like Balan most participants, who went for their first 10-days Viapssana course, did not seem to internalize or connect with kindness (d= -0.03 @ T0 to T1), while there was a gradual increase in kindness at follow-up (d=0.09 @ T0 to T2). However, for the participants from the control group there was rather a complete disconnect with being kind (being compassionate and caring towards others without expecting anything in return) especially during the pandemic which reflected in negative effect size at post and follow-up (d= -0.19 & -0.18 respectively). Glass et al. (1981) argued that there can be a danger of classifying effect size as 'small', 'medium' or 'large' and thereby drawing inferences about the efficacy of the treatment. They argued that the treatment's needs to be examined in comparison to other interventions that produce similar effect especially in light of the relative costs and benefits (e.g., an inexpensive change that can raise academic performance by an effect size of even 0.1 may be considered as an extremely significant improvement). Thus, the gradual increase in kindness (a morally valued trait of personality) for the experimental group on one hand, and the decrease in kindness for the control group on the other hand is undoubtedly significant, in light of the meta-inference based on triangulation. Such impact gains greater prominence owing to [a] how consequences cumulate over time (popularly known as 'when a little is a lot'), especially while studying the influence of an ongoing psychological process on an individual's behaviour (Funder & Ozer, 2019) and [b] ripple effect across domains over time, given the established influence of personality on behaviour which consequentially predicts social, workplace and health outcomes (Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2006).

Love as a character strength denotes valuing and contributing to close(st) relationships with reciprocity (not boundless). We argue that the experiential wisdom about self-inflicted suffering (caused out of ignorance) gained during the first Vipassana course, would have helped the participants to relate to and empathise with the suffering of their near(est) and dear(est) ones. This reflects in small but increasing effect size at post and follow-up (d=0.27 & 0.36 respectively) as compared to the control group (d= -0.21 & -0.06 respectively) who did not benefit from such wisdom.

This shows how the virtue of loving-kindness, which is the need of the hour, not only naturally cultivates and grows through the practice of Vipassana but also that it is elusive or may even deteriorate amongst non-practitioners (control group), especially amidst stress and adversity faced during the pandemic.

10.3 Workplace Implications

Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt (2021) elaborated on how mindfulness may help employees to overcome the unique challenges associated with working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the blurring of personal and professional life, they suggested that mindfulness fosters self-regulation and the ability to unplug and detach from work, leading to enhanced

well-being and productivity. Vipassana MM helps to cultivate the same by enhancing executive control through two facets - awareness and equanimity like the two wings of a bird (Hart, 2011; Teper et al., 2013); which in turn leads to decentering (psychological distancing from one's thoughts and emotions) and non-attachment (Ekici et al., 2020).

Mindfulness fosters prosocial behaviour and cultivates ethical sensitivities (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012; Verhaeghen & Aikman, 2020), which is undoubtedly the need of the hour. Findings from both the strands strengthen this argument and augment the theoretical frame of S-ART i.e., sustained enhancement in trait 'EI' and character strengths coupled with emergence of super-ordinate themes 'FDF' and 'EMCC' (that showcase how 'otherness' and 'loving-kindness' naturally and incessantly flows as one walks on the path and lives in accordance with the law of the nature). This brings to life the teachings of His holiness the 14th Dalai Lama (2001, p. 25, 27) who insists that a 'spiritual revolution' encompasses an ethical revolution' as he lays the foundation of ethics for the new millennium, "I have accumulated enough experience to be completely confident that the teachings of the Buddha are both relevant and useful to humanity. If a person puts them into practice, it is certain that not only they but others, too, will benefit… I trust that I have made it clear that a spiritual revolution entails an ethical revolution."

Shahbaz & Parker (2021) argued that while the idiographic commitment puts the individual at the centre, it is imperative to expand the understanding of how mindfulness as an individual's trait/ characteristic may interact with workplace factors (like autonomy/ climate/ team mindfulness) to influence the workplace outcomes by leveraging the trait activation theory.

Shahbaz and Parker (2021) have identified a multitude of positive workplace outcomes in an integrative review on workplace mindfulness. They had impressed upon future researchers to expand the understanding of how workplace factors may mediate or moderate the relationship between mindfulness and workplace outcomes by leveraging the trait activation framework (Tett & Burnett, 2003). In light of the results and previous findings relating to the significant positive effect of MMs/ MBIs on trait EI, trait affect and mindfulness, it may indeed be beneficial to investigate the process by which workplace factors may nurture or encourage the expression of individual traits cultivated by mindfulness; thereby leading to sustainable workplace outcomes.

Future research may also examine a vital question posed by Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012, p. 731), "How does individual mindfulness influence organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing?"

10.4 RCT – Gold standard or not!?

RCTs have become an accepted gold standard for assessing treatment efficacy owing to statistical controls for the impact of the unknown with double-blind administration promising to reduce various forms of biases. So, it is natural to establish guidelines for such reporting: "To assess the strengths and limitations of an RCT, readers need and deserve to know the quality of its methodology" (Moher et al., 2001, p. 2). Accordingly, CONSORT statement (checklist and flow diagram) has been published and revised to enhance the quality of reports of RCTs and the same have adopted by several journals over the years with demonstrable

differences in the completeness of reporting (*Impact of CONSORT*, 2012). So, as a part of the prescriptive research agenda for strengthening clinical interventions on mindfulness, Van Dam and colleagues assert "Replication of earlier studies with appropriately randomized designs and proper active control groups will be absolutely crucial" (Van Dam et al., 2017, p. 12).

But there are two key questions that need to be examined (a) Are RCTs truly the gold standard? (b) Do RCTs lend themselves to all kinds of interventions?

RCTs raise substantial epistemological, methodological and interpretive problems (Ashcroft, 2004; Cartwright et al., 2010; Thompson, 2010). Kirmayer (2012) astutely argues that RCTs are far from generating indisputable evidence and highlights that several interventions do not even lend themselves to RCTs as they may be difficult to standardize, randomize and blind (as intervention may call for explicit awareness, engagement and commitment from the participant). He succinctly highlights the downside of being fixated to support only evidence-based decision making; as key stakeholders tend to rely on systematic reviews for inferential reasoning, "However, systematic literature reviews depend entirely on what evidence is available to critically evaluate and synthesize. Not everything gets studied and not every study that is completed gets published… Gaps in the literature represent untested possibilities that then lose credibility" (Kirmayer, 2012, p. 250).

We argue that [a] RCTs do not lend themselves to fully understanding and examining the 'what' and 'how' of the impact of Vipassana Mindfulness meditation. As highlighted earlier (section 6.1) it is not practical, ethical or efficacious to opt for random assignment and thus quasi-experimental (QE) design was consciously deployed with design features, as recommended by Shadish and colleagues (2002), incorporated to aid causal inferences, [b] Results (no significant difference between the experimental and control group on any DV at T0 and the trend lines crossing over for most DVs: refer section 7.2 for details] showcase little likelihood of initial selection bias on account of non-randomization and the pattern of observed outcomes is particularly amenable to causal interpretation in QE design (Shadish et al., 2002). This must be read in conjunction with similar effect sizes reported for RCTs and QE designs by Grossman and colleagues (2010) in their meta-analysis on the impact of MBSR on mental health outcomes: (For RCTs: d=0.54, CI [0.35-0.74]; For QE d=0.54, CI [0.32-0.76]). [c] By focusing on RCTs alone, we are likely to accentuate the hazards of distortion and reification that has led to commoditization of mindfulness (refer to section 5). Thus, Van Dam and colleagues (2017) rightly advised that the research community in the field to mindfulness to overcome the hesitancy and move beyond logical positivism. This parallel mixed design study (deploying QE design and IPA) is a judicious and crucial step in that direction. The need for leveraging multiple methods has been lucidly articulated by Denzin (2009, p. 308), "The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies."

10.5 Limitations and Future Research

This study's limitations also afford exciting avenues for future research. The precision of effect estimates may be influenced by non-randomization (Higgins & Green, 2008). There is evidence of non-randomized studies reporting higher mean effect size vis-à-vis randomized studies (Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012). Consequently, despite the inclusion of several design features that aided causal inferences in this quasi-experimental study, there may be a scope for judiciously examining and adding some more features (if feasible) that may not only further alleviate threats to internal validity but also make the inferences richer. As recommended by Shadish and colleagues (2002), these features may comprise double pre-test and/ or multiple non-equivalent dependent variables and/ or combining switching replications with a non-equivalent control group design (providing treatment to a part of the original control group with others remaining untreated and reintroducing treatment a second time to some of the original treatment group). The last feature, as leveraged by Gunn and colleagues (1985), will help to [a] examine if the effects of Vipassana MM are sustained over time given the contrasting evidence at 3-months follow-up (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009), [b] analyze benefits of an additional 10-days course as penetrative wisdom (*bhāvanā-mayā paññā*) tends to grow and [c] contrast influence of hours spent in course vs. daily practice in light of the evidence that hours of retreat/ course practice more strongly correlate with select outcomes (Goleman & Davidson, 2017).

Second, trait EI was measured using the shorter version, i.e. TEIQue–SF, to reduce survey fatigue. Consequently, some factors like the self-control factor showed relatively lower internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.702, though it met the minimum acceptable level of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The extended version of TEIQue may be administered to efficaciously examine and contrast nuanced indirect effects of Vipassana MM on well-being via one or more factors of trait EI (e.g., decrease in NA via increase in self-control).

Third, as a part of mixed methods design, an additional active control group or active alternative treatment (MBI) could significantly augment the meta-inferences and aid in understanding and contrasting the underlying processes through which MMs and MBIs exert their beneficial effects, respectively. This is essential given the enormous differences between MMs and MBIs wrt philosophy, technique, aims, outcomes and neural underpinnings (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011; Davidson & Begley, 2012). While this demands significant international collaboration and a concerted effort, perhaps the research community owes it to humankind as the time is ripe to [a] empower individuals across the globe to choose their path, [b] shape policies and enhance workplace adoption and [c] meaningfully contribute to further sustainable development goal 3 – 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages'. Perhaps this is the toughest and the best thing to do!

11 FOOTNOTES

1. *Theravāda* (Pāli): ‘Teaching of the elders’ - the monk elders and saints who preserved the teaching after the passing away of the Buddha.
2. *10 Perfections:* Giving (dāna), morality (sīla), renunciation *(nekkhamma),* wisdom (paññā), energy *(viriya),* patience *(khanti),* truthfulness *(sacca),* resolve (adhiṭṭhāna), loving-kindness (mettā), equanimity (upekkhā).

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